



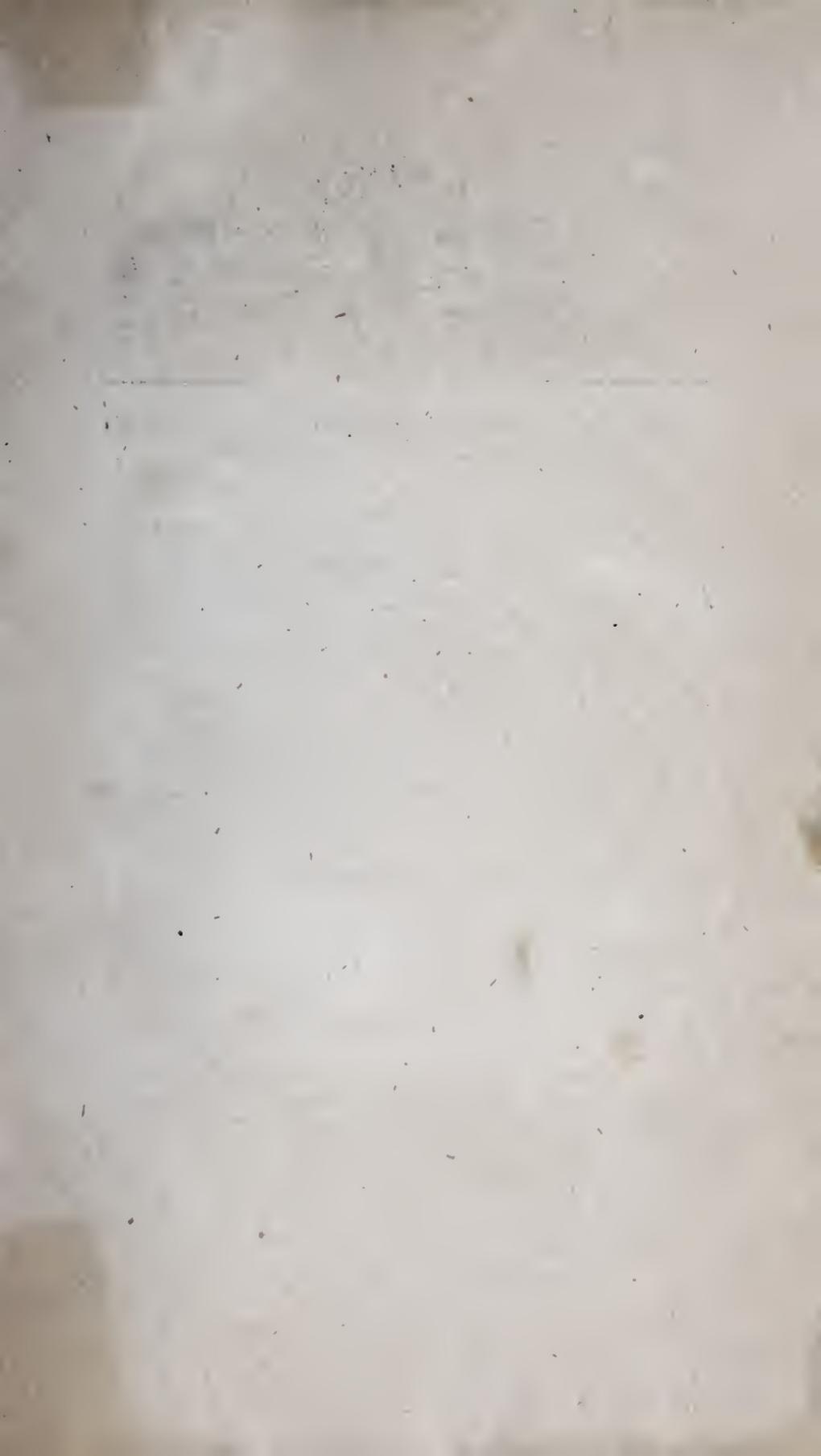
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MATERIALS
FOR
THINKING.

BY WILLIAM BURDON.

FIFTH EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MATERIALS
FOR
THINKING.

THE STATE OF SOCIETY,
*And the Improvements of which it is capable,
impartially considered.*

THE life of man is so full of calamities, and exposed to so many more, that happiness, tho' constantly his aim, seems never intended to be his lot. The sources of misery are many and various; some men find them within themselves, and others in the objects which surround them, and few, even of the dullest minds, are at all times exempt from uneasiness. Gaiety and apathy of temper preserve many from suffering, and in a world where pain is so much more frequent than pleasure, they are not to be pitied; but they are most

to be envied, who, by the constant exercise of their reason, have learned to make a just estimate of life, and, in all their distresses, can philosophically exclaim, "Such is the condition of mortality!" To arrive at this desirable state of mind, it is requisite to have had much experience of the world, and to have coolly reflected on the nature and constitution of things. Without such reflection, no man of sense, or sensibility, can patiently endure the evils he must inevitably suffer, and see others suffer, in the world. Hence naturally arises the question on the origin of evil, whether it is inherent in the constitution of nature, or capable of being removed by reason and philosophy. To me it appears that there is a radical defect in the system which can never be wholly amended, tho' it may be somewhat lessened. How or from whence that defect has arisen I pretend not to understand, tho' it cannot be denied that the disproportion which exists between the increase of population and the means of subsistence, is the primary cause of evil from which most of our calamities are derived, and to which all the other evils of the world are subservient as ministering agents. This too is the limit which nature has placed to the happiness of man,—a limit which he

can never transgress, tho' he may do much to improve his condition.

Had the earth possessed a productive power, equal to the supply of an unlimited population, the first cause of contention among mankind would have been considerably diminished; but the contrary fact being fully proved, and the love of life being the first and most active principle in human nature, the love of power, (which is only the same principle in excess or a desire to possess the greatest portion of the means of living, and to control the exertions of other men), is the visible cause of those miseries and contentions which have hitherto kept the world in commotion. But tho' these propensities are almost instinctive in man, they are not like the instincts of the lion and the eagle, incapable of control, for being also endowed with a nobler principle, which is that of reason, he is rendered capable of diminishing the force of a propensity, which, tho' implanted in him for the preservation of his existence, if suffered to operate unrestrained, tends to more of evil than is requisite for that purpose, and would render the world a scene of destruction and misery, even greater than it is at present. The evils of the passions, ambition, envy, pride, malice, and hatred, which

are the cause of contention and tyranny, have their origin in the source already mentioned. The evils of nature, such as the inclemency of the seasons, the force of the elements, and the frequency of disease, seem to answer the same purpose, viz. to lessen the numbers of mankind, and to shorten their existence, in order to keep down population to a level with the means of subsistence.

Having stated the difference between the productive powers of the earth and of man, to be the primary cause of the evils that are in the world, it is requisite for me to develope this principle somewhat more fully, and to shew, that as it exists in the constitution of nature, a considerable portion of evil must ever continue to be the lot of mankind, notwithstanding their utmost endeavors to improve their condition. This principle is the great wheel which moves the whole machinery of society, and it ought never to be lost sight of in any topic of moral or political enquiry; for tho' it may perhaps border upon the ridiculous when applied to some of its ultimate results, yet it is nevertheless the remote cause even of the most trifling events of the world. All schemes of moral reformation or political œconomy, which are formed without a due regard to the principle of population,

must end in frustration and disappointment. Supposing the judgment, science, and benevolence of the statesman, the œconomist, and the philanthropist, to be combined for a hundred years throughout the whole globe, to increase the numbers of mankind, and the fruitfulness of the earth, it is a melancholy consideration to reflect, that in that space of time their benevolent endeavors would only end in the increase of human misery ; for the superfluous population produced, after the earth was fully peopled and cultivated, would require and receive some violent check to reduce it to the level of subsistence ; every country being full, emigration would be impossible, and the calamity would be general in all countries at once. Nature has therefore provided that these checks should operate constantly and gradually, thus producing their effect with less violence than by one sudden explosion. And this is the state of things which philosophers and divines have delighted to contemplate as the best of all possible contrivances for the production of human happiness. A state in which men are compelled by the necessity of their nature, to be either perpetually murdering each other, or punishing themselves by a life of celibacy, to pre-

vent their being starved ; a state in which the numbers of mankind are so continually pressing upon each other, that if the old don't die, the young must, and therefore thousands must be carried off in the flower of youth, and health, and virtue—because the old and the wicked have stronger constitutions. Hence it will be found, that what are commonly called divine judgments, and the scourges of guilty nations, are nothing more than the common operations of nature in conducting the mechanism of the world.

Tho' thankful for many things that we enjoy, and for the destiny which sent us into this state of enjoyment, let us never insult our reason by unqualified praise of what we neither can fully comprehend, nor impartially approve. Tho' we should be content to take things as they are when they cannot be remedied, or endeavor to remedy what admits of being altered, let us never be withheld by any timid or false maxims of prudence, from expressing the disinterested conviction of our minds, even when it opposes established opinions. Let us fearlessly examine, and boldly pronounce the decision of our reason, and should we find it our duty to submit where resistance would be vain, our submission should

not be that of slaves, but of reasoning and intelligent beings, endeavoring to make the best of all that cannot be remedied, and to improve all that is capable of improvement.

The difference which exists, and ever will exist, between speculation and practice, is to speculative men no small source of disquiet, and has caused the world much calamity, from the desire that all men have to publish their speculations. It has its origin in the disproportion already stated, for while that remains as the fruitful parent of struggles and contentions among men, it will be in vain that philosophers or politicians attempt to realize those beautiful visions which it is so easy to conceive, and so difficult to execute. Theory and fact must never be at variance, because theory is nothing more than facts generalized; but the word theory is often used for the word speculation, which is almost perpetually contradicted by experience. The original source of inequality is established by nature, and a considerable portion of the same must be extended to all things in which this is concerned; she has given to men a reasoning faculty, which can "shape the goodliest forms of things," and yet neither their actions, nor her works conform to that standard. It is reasonable in

speculation to suppose, that she would proportion the productive powers of the earth to the support of the beings that she might send into the world, but the fact is otherwise; here then speculation and reality are at variance, and they who attempt to act upon this supposition will be in danger of doing much mischief, while they thus oppose the designs of nature. It is reasonable to suppose that men might in time be brought to act according to the principles of strict justice, and thus realize that happy state of which philosophers and divines have indulged themselves in the contemplation; but if they did, they would in time multiply so fast, that nature could not provide for their most moderate wants. There then we see a perpetual barrier opposed to the improvement of mankind, and that a considerable portion of evil must ever exist in the world, tho' much may be overcome by the exertions of mankind to improve their condition, and that these exertions are as much conformable to the designs of nature, as the impossibility of ever realizing a state of complete happiness. Vice and misery will ever be at work to reduce the numbers of mankind, and tho' they may be restrained, they can never be extirpated.

The state of the world has never yet permitted, nor ever will permit, a strict conformity to general maxims of prudence, which, tho' frequently of the greatest utility, require sometimes to be accommodated to the various situations of life; but of the measure of that accommodation, it is only men of superior minds who can judge, or to whom that power can be entrusted with safety. General rules are the leading strings of fools, men of sense only know how to depart from them, and such men are rare. The ultimate object of all our actions is happiness, the attainment of which object nothing can more materially obstruct than prepossessions and false persuasions. A prepossession is an opinion not founded in fact, nor in reason, and upon a strict examination it will be found, that the greatest part of our actions is grounded on these prepossessions. The whole of our religious belief rests on no other foundation, and therefore the superstructure can only be the receptacle of fraud, imposture, forgery, persecution, murder, and the whole train of evils which attend the love and the pursuit of power; for tho' religion pretends to subdue this passion and all the other bad passions, it has only served as a cloak to disguise them, in order the more effectually to

attain their object. Let us examine the world and its institutions accurately, and we shall find that most of those things which it is pretended are conducive to human happiness have tended to destroy it. General rules, which are only an accommodation to the weakness of human reason, have occasioned infinite misery, and when every case is determined solely by its own merits, that is, when the reason of individuals is sufficiently improved to admit of this mode of determination, private and general happiness will be considerably augmented. Till we can with safety relax the severity of general rules, they must unavoidably create great inconvenience and misery. To get rid therefore of all false notions relating to happiness is the greatest achievement which the progress of reason and philosophy can effect, they have made considerable advances within the last fifty years, and I have no doubt that the next fifty will nearly complete their journey. In one word, morality is the only sure friend of man, and religion his greatest enemy, because under pretence of ensuring the happiness of a future life, it lays useless and severe restraints upon the present, and gives one half of mankind a power to torment the other; and yet even

after this great tormentor is removed, there will still remain numerous sources of misery, arising from the nature and constitution of the world, which no human power can alter or control. Virtue is the application of reason to the affairs of the world, or acting according to that standard of right which the general reason of mankind has established. It is not possible, however, for men at all times to comply with this rule; complete, unerring virtue is no more to be looked for in this world, than complete happiness; but as the inclination of man leads him to pursue the one, so it is his duty to aim at the other. Neither the works of nature, nor the works of man are faultless, hence, therefore, our expectations of excellence can never be realized; some defect there will always be found in every human being, and in every human performance, for if it were otherwise, men would either become immortal, or live too long. To die is the greatest defect of our nature, but it harmonizes with the rest of the system, in which all things are perpetually changing their shape. The earth cannot produce beyond a certain limit; man, therefore, cannot multiply nor exist beyond what is requisite to preserve the due proportion to his subsistence. The pro-

ductions of the earth, and the productions of man, are in a continual state of mutability; nothing is stationary, tho' some things change more slowly than others, and therefore the change is less perceived; even opinions the most venerable from their antiquity, in time become obsolete, and cease to be regarded. Tho' this perpetual rotation of things is productive of much evil, it produces also much pleasure, arising from variety.

To this view of things it may perhaps be objected, that it tends to repress the ardor of patriotism, and the zeal for reformation, by giving room to believe, that all their efforts will be fruitless. I have only to answer, that were it not for the exertions of spirited, enlightened, and independent men, the world would be much worse than it is; so that no man need be afraid, that all he does will be to no purpose, nor on the other hand, that he can do too much; for nature will ever maintain her rights, and in all our exertions will prevent us from transgressing the limit which she has fixed. The constant tendency of mankind to increase their numbers, beyond the power of the earth to produce the means of subsistence, being thus proved to be the source of the principal evils in the world, it

becomes us to enquire how this tendency may be best counteracted, and how far the faculties of man are capable of meliorating his condition. The prejudice in favor of an excessive population, having its origin in that love of dominion so natural to man, renders it extremely difficult to be overcome ; yet no one who impartially considers the matter, will deny that wars would be much less frequent if there were no hired soldiers; for, in modern times, it is chiefly of the refuse of society that armies are composed,—of men who, having no regular means of subsistence, let themselves out to fight the battles of interested and ambitious statesmen, and thus become drains to a redundant population. Surely this is an employment both disgraceful to themselves, and injurious to the rest of society, and could population be reduced by any other means, it would afford consolation to the philanthropist, and contribute to the increase of virtue and comfort ; for a population of ignorance, vice, and misery, neither increases the honor, nor the prosperity of a nation. The first, the best, and the only certain means of limiting population to the increase of subsistence, and, at the same time, to promote the happiness of mankind, is the exercise of that virtue or prudence which prevents a man

from propagating his species without the certainty of their support ; but as this is a degree of self-denial not to be generally expected, and resting solely in the breasts of individuals, cannot be enforced by legislative provisions, other remedies must be looked for in aid of so precarious a dependence, and these can arise only from the paternal interference of government, which ought at all times to be more desirous of promoting the comfort of its subjects, than increasing their numbers ; or at least, while they aim at an extensive population, to provide for a similar extent of comfort and convenience. Two things are especially required for this purpose ; first, that government, on the one hand, should favor no scheme nor institution tending to an excessive population, like our present system of poor-laws, which hold out a bounty to vice and indolence, and on the other, that they do all in their power, by gentle means, to lessen the possession of enormous property in few hands, and by thus diffusing the wealth of society, create a proportionate increase of virtue, happiness, and comfort to a numerous population, without which no country can flourish. The only just and practicable method of promoting this desirable purpose, and to which I am of opi-

nion that no weighty objection can be urged, is to destroy the right of primogeniture in the succession to property, whenever a father, mother, or other relation dies intestate. A law passed for this purpose would injure no one ; it would deprive no one of any thing he possesses ; it would interfere with no man's expectations, and take no man by surprise. To limit the case to those whose parents or friends have omitted to bequeath their property, is a remedy which, tho' slow is sure ; it will not produce any great change in society for less than forty or fifty years ; yet even that is sufficient for those who are more desirous of general good, than to gratify their own propensity to innovation, and it is more conformable to justice, policy, and humanity, than arbitrarily to decree that no man shall make an eldest son, but divide his property equally. Such a law has a direct tendency to an infinitely small division of property—an evil much greater than those which it proposes to remedy.

Whenever we desire to do a general good, we should carefully avoid even partial injustice ; and tho' it is impossible to please all, we should endeavor to please as many as possible, for headlong reformers counteract their

own intentions,—they make many enemies and few friends, and therefore meet with so many obstructions, that they arrive at their end more slowly than by gentle and moderate innovation. The means which I have proposed seem to promise much good, and to remove much evil, because a custom founded on injustice may be removed by the mere operation of time, without injuring those whose prejudices and expectations had taken deep root in the example of their forefathers.

Whether the law of entails, as connected with the above-mentioned custom, ought also to be removed, deserves to be considered. I have no hesitation in saying, that it ought to remain as a barrier against the too small division of property; it is not without objections, yet they are in many cases balanced by its advantages. Entails of moderate estates are useful for the same reason that they are an evil in large ones; they serve to keep property together. That every man should do what he will with his own, is a fundamental law of society; let him then entail his property, or devise it in what manner he pleases; to interfere with this right is greater injustice than he can commit by any partial division of his effects. When a man leaves all his estate

to one child, he may be said to be unkind to the rest, but not unjust, because they have no right to any part of it, and of that which they have no right to, they cannot be unjustly deprived. The alteration I have proposed by no means interferes with the right of any individual to dispose of his property; it only aims at removing a custom which is unjust, because it gives all that to one which others have an equal claim to; for when a man has neglected to avail himself of that right which society guarantees to him, viz. the right of devising his property, it is fair and equitable that those who are most nearly related to him should enjoy it in common with each other. Every man should be allowed to dispose of his property, whether inherited or acquired, under certain restrictions, but if he neglects to do so, let society do it for him, according to the principles of justice and equality.

The remedy here proposed for the evils occasioned by immense property is just and moderate; it will be chiefly produced by time, and time is the enemy of no man, for it regards all men alike, and gently softens the effects of folly and prejudice. Whoever thinks to remove in a day the institutions (whether political or religious), which have existed for ages,

will find that he is in danger of doing more harm than good, and that he will not be seconded by the general voice, nor even by a small part of mankind, for prejudice always remains longest with the multitude, as they judge not from reason, but from authority, from custom, and from partial evidence. The evils occasioned by the present enormous inequality of property are so numerous and so weighty, that it is difficult to know which to mention first, yet that which is by no means the least, is the respect attached to riches in preference to every other possession, so great, indeed, as to invert the natural order of things, and to raise the meanest, both in body and mind, to the highest pitch of rank and dignity, while talents, virtue, and learning, frequently perish in obscurity and poverty. Juvenal lamented this evil near two thousand years ago, and it is not yet diminished. The importance which is given to men of fortune, both by the actual force of their property, and by the tacit consent of mankind, in all matters whether of opinion, taste, or authority, has a most pernicious effect on things of the greatest moment, as well as on the lesser affairs of custom and fashion. Laws and regulations materially injurious to the generality of mankind,

are frequently enacted by the weight and power of rich men, which could never otherwise have been even proposed, and the share they exclusively possess in the legislature of this country is frequently adverse to the interest of the middle and lower ranks. I do not mean that the influence of property in the constitution is at any rate an evil, for property is certainly the safest claim to represent, and be represented, but that the great preponderance of the landed and monied interests is hostile to the interests of the other ranks of society.

The only legitimate use of riches is to acquire happiness for ourselves, without encroaching upon the happiness of others; but when they are diverted from their natural channel, and become the means of political corruption, or individual oppression, they inundate and devastate, like the overflowings of a mighty river, the lands they were intended to fertilize. When riches usurp the place of talents, and seat themselves in the chair of wisdom, they take what they have no claim to, and disturb the natural order of things. When they place their possessors in elevated situations, for which they are neither qualified by abilities nor education, they become a public grievance by depriving the state of the ser-

vices of those men whose talents are thus suffered to lie dormant. And even when rich men, by their influence in the state, are the means of obtaining for others those offices for which merit is the only claim, they equally endanger the public safety, by placing the guidance of the whole, or the execution of particular parts, in the hands of those to whom, from their want of ability, they ought not to be confided. Let the rich man enjoy himself in the pleasures of sense, or the pleasures of benevolence, and spend his money in private as he pleases, but let him not presume, by the mere force of his property, to influence the affairs of government, nor interfere where he has no just claim from his talents, natural or acquired. To expect this degree of forbearance and honest principle from men who know and feel their power, and hardly conceive it to be injurious, is vain and chimerical; it is only by the wisdom and virtue of those who administer the government, or the wholesome strength of the law, that the improper use of riches can be successfully opposed, and without these, no government can long resist the force of that undermining corruption, which is the sure attendant of enormous wealth.

The increase of luxury which attends the ac-

cumulation of property in few hands, is among the greatest of the evils it occasions; for that luxury is an evil, however some men may have doubted it, and others denied, is incontestible, if we consider its effects on public and private morality. Comfort may be enjoyed by many,—luxury is only the lot of a few, and it is this which constitutes its distinctive mischief; for where many are aiming at what only a few can possess, they must endeavor to over-reach one another, and thus the fences of morality are overthrown in the contest. All institutions, therefore, which have a tendency to favor the acquisition of enormous property, are destructive of that progress in wisdom and virtue which tends to the highest improvement and refinement of our nature.

The profligate waste which is ever the attendant on great masses of property, is also an evil of no mean magnitude. To those who are unacquainted with the interior of a great man's house this may appear imaginary, but the fact cannot be controverted, that both from the unavoidable and intentional waste committed in such houses, hundreds might be comfortably maintained; by the friends of population, let this consideration be duly attended to. The possessors of enormous property, while

they thus diminish the comforts and vitiate the morals of their inferiors, are themselves not always happy ; they are like spoilt children, whose every wish and desire is gratified as soon as formed, so that they lose all the pleasures of expectation and hope. They rove from one amusement to another, which, like the playthings of children, are eagerly sought for, and soon thrown aside ; disgusted with satiety, they seek for what wealth cannot give, and find others happier than themselves, not because they have more enjoyments, but because they are easier pleased. Their pampered appetites and indulged caprices can relish nothing simple in food, dress, or furniture ; art and luxury exhaust all their stores to reanimate human nature, which has already sunk under their embraces. All their enjoyments consist of mere corporeal gratification which, by constant repetition, at length become insipid, and leave them without a hope or a pleasure, but to forget their misery in the empty buzz of a crowd, as wretched and contemptible as themselves. Their education, their manners, and their rank, keep them for ever at a distance from all but their own set ; they are therefore ignorant of the rest of mankind, and to know each other they call know-

ing the world, and beyond that they know nothing. As to the lower ranks, they consider them as a distinct race of beings, formed only for their use, and supported only by their wealth. The importance attached to riches, and the superiority they confer in the present state of civilized society, are a temptation to all men to acquire them either by honest or dishonest means; we need not wonder, therefore, at the maxim of a celebrated statesman, who affirmed, that every man had his price, for while riches exclusively confer honor, power, and luxury, every man is liable to be tempted to acquire them, even dishonestly. To yield to temptations which gratify our strongest propensities is natural,—to remove these temptations does not alter, but improve our nature.

To the remains of the feudal system of tyranny and oppression, and to the subsequent institution of chivalry, are to be imputed, as secondary causes, many of the evils which at present exist in society. The founders of that institution, convinced of the radical cruelty and injustice of the feudal law, sought to conceal some of its most glaring enormities under the specious coverings of loyalty, gallantry, and honor. An unbounded submission to their

leaders, a false and superstitious attachment to the persons of women, which degraded and enslaved their minds, and a strong, ungovernable spirit of haughtiness, disguised under the name of honor, were the chief characteristics of the hero in the times of chivalry ; and tho' the warlike part of the two systems has decayed thro' time, or been softened by other institutions, yet all their leading principles are yet to be found in the laws of property, gallantry, and honor, which as they originated in force and folly, retain much of their original character. The servile adoration which is paid to artificial rank and dignity, is not one of the least degrading and pernicious consequences of the feudal and chivalrous spirit ; it damps the ardor of all moral competitions, and confounds the distinction between vice and virtue, even more effectually than the power of riches. It is in truth more contemptible, as it has no intrinsic, nor even relative value, but in the opinion of mankind ; whereas the other must always have a certain degree of positive as well as relative worth, while the conventions of civilized society continue to exist.—The respect paid to officers of power and trust, to legislators, and to all that are in authority, when they are chosen for their virtues or their

talents, is founded on reason, and sanctioned by necessity; but the mere arbitrary distinction of names, compared with the superior distinction of splendid merit, is poor and contemptible; it excites no sentiments of esteem or respect, and if it is outwardly honored, it is inwardly despised.

The state of females in modern society, tho' far superior in many free countries to those which are despotic and barbarous, has yet much in it to be lamented and amended.— They are admitted to a more equal state of familiarity and intercourse than formerly; they are the companions of our gaiety and relaxation, but seldom of our more serious hours, and if their minds are capable of rational exertion, it is more by chance than by education or intentional improvement; for except in some splendid examples of those who have done themselves justice, and risen superior to the general degradation of their sex, the treatment of women is not calculated to improve their minds, or give them that rank and weight in society which they have in many instances shewn they deserve. Their instruction extends not beyond a few frivolous accomplishments, and if they can but shine in company, it is all that is expected of them, and all

they desire. To excel in fine works, which at best is but specious idleness, to execute a difficult piece of music, or to play well at cards, is to be completely accomplished, if these are accompanied with a degree of fashionable ease and impudence, but their minds are left to receive the bias which chance or circumstances may impress. Who then can wonder that women are more the sport of their feelings than men, when so little pains are taken to strengthen their judgment? The more violent and boisterous passions are indeed kept within bounds, by the common restraints of decency and the opinion of society, but the more secret and dangerous from hence receive additional strength and vigor; there are few women, particularly if they have met with disappointment, who are not proud, jealous, envious, revengeful, cruel, and insidious. In the generality of women, every thing relating to the mind is little, illiberal, and narrow; their sentiments are not the result of reflection, but of imitation; they have no enlarged views of human nature, no principles of action but their immediate interest, their pleasure, or amusement; their conversation, therefore, is not such as can engage the attention or delight the superior mind of a well-informed

man ; if it is not about dress, it is scandal or anecdote. An illiterate woman, if clever, is dangerous ; if not, she is generally contemptible. Yet there are women, and I should be guilty both of ingratitude and injustice if I said there were not, who with elegant manners, cultivated minds, and liberal sentiments, are formed for the delight and instruction of all around them ; who can both give and receive information with pleasure, and are qualified to discharge all the relative duties of life with firmness, dignity, and precision ; who know and feel their *own* importance without trenching upon that which nature and society have for wise purposes conferred on their superiors. There are others, who, without much information, or strength of character, win our affection and esteem by the simplicity of their manners, the vivacity of their tempers, and the amiable sweetness of their whole deportment. Happy is the man who has found one of either description to be the partner of his griefs, his joys, and his comforts, he has secured one of the first essentials to happiness, and will find the pleasure of his life exalted by participation, and its evils lessened. The influence of women on our minds and modes of living is certainly very different from both

in nature and degree from what it ought to be, and not only requires to be diminished but improved. Were women more rational, they would not be less agreeable, but less the object and the cause of luxury ; at present their minds are degraded in order to flatter their vanity, and this degradation has a similar effect on the minds of men ; we spoil each other, we mutually corrupt and are corrupted.

The word honor, when it means that purity of principle which preserves a man from every thing mean and contemptible in thought, word, or deed, is a valuable supplement to the law of the land and the laws of morality ; but when it means no more than that wretched relique of barbarism, which consists in a tender sensibility to fancied injuries, is rather a prejudice than a principle, for it exists solely in opinion, and by opinion can at any time be removed. The man who is offended applies to the sword alone for redress, and if his adversary is of too high a rank to join in equal combat, he has no retreat from that shame which a word, a look, or a gesture may inflict, but in suicide or banishment. No consideration of duty, *affection*, nor interest can restrain him whose honor is concerned, from resorting to extremities, and all other rela-

tions of life are sacrificed to false ideas of shame and contempt. A sentiment thus irritable and delicate, tho' it may tend to polish and refine, has in it originally, a considerable mixture of barbarism ; it forms an incongruous union of the civilized and savage state ; for tho' honor is one of those feelings which considerably tends to refinement, yet death is the barbarous resort of savages. Honor, therefore, in modern times, might surely be satisfied with a more moderate atonement; but the opinion of the world holds the contrary, and no man is bold enough to brave it.

The military system which at present prevails in all the states of Europe is a remnant of feudal tyranny, considerably diminished and modified, by the improvements which have been introduced into civilized society, yet it can at best only be tolerated as an evil, which a more improved state of civilization may remove ; it cannot indeed be dispensed with at present, because the people are not, in any nation, sufficiently enlightened to be governed entirely without force ; yet it is an evil sincerely to be lamented, for all military establishments are essentially destructive of the health, morals, and comforts of those who compose them, and can only be called for at home

against a mob. When the mob is civilized, there will be no occasion for the military.—When governments act justly, there will be no need of force, for the people never rise against themselves. A government of barracks, of spies, and informers, has a natural tendency to degrade both the instruments and the sufferers, for a soldiery who are ready to execute any thing, and a people who are prepared to submit to them, must be lost to all the energies of virtue, and ready for the yoke of despotism.

There is another purpose for which military establishments are required, more nefarious, if possible, than the former, which is, external war,—a practice involving in itself such a combination of guilt and misery as can hardly be imagined to proceed from the malice of infernal beings, much less from men to each other. To keep in pay and training two sets of men who are called out to murder one another, and to desolate their respective countries alternately, without any quarrel of their own, at the mere will and pleasure of a few ambitious men, who might as well settle their disputes by any other means, is a phenomenon which can only be accounted for by supposing it an essential part of the system ; but while it re-

mains, the world can never be completely civilized, nor can we suppose it to be governed by a Being infinitely benevolent.

The abolition of the great feudal tenures in this country, about the commencement of the sixteenth century, the invention of printing, and the introduction of commerce, all contributed to give a new turn to the pursuits of mankind, and to lessen the evils of military power and ignorance. Yet the great principles of inequality remaining the same, the tendency to the accumulation of property was not destroyed; and tho' the comforts of life were inevitably more diffused, yet they were not so much so as to prevent the establishment of a new aristocracy, viz.—that of money, which, by degrees, committed inroads upon the other, till having acquired an equal share of importance, it divided with it the power and honors of the state, so that instead of one we have now two aristocracies, those of landed and commercial property.

The establishments of religion which exist at present in the principal states of Europe, had their origin, like feudal tyranny, in the love of dictating to mankind, and are encroachments on that unrestrained liberty of thinking and acting, which all men are desirous to claim for

themselves, and few are willing to allow to others.

Mankind, when they first began to reason, attempted to account for the phænomena of nature and the government of the world, and unwilling to rest satisfied with what are termed secondary causes, they invented doctrines and systems of theology as the origin and sanction of all the good and all the evil that are in the world, nay they even subjected the most obvious rules and principles of morality to divine interference by attaching them to some divine fable. Every system of religion invented by man requires a national establishment to preserve it from innovation and decay; it cannot stand the test of time and examination ; it must, therefore, be supported by authority, and is on that account essentially hostile to the progress of reason, and an evil of no small or partial nature. Nothing tends so much to weaken the mind of man as religion, for as it is founded on implicit faith, and requires a total submission of the understanding, it renders its adherents incapable of reasoning on all subjects in which its tenets are concerned, so that the strongest minds in other respects are here exerted only in the invention of plausible arguments to defend what cannot

be defended on the principles of impartial reasoning.—To prove the total inefficacy of religion, it is only requisite to shew that societies might subsist and have subsisted without religion, but not without morality; the one exists only in imagination, the other depends wholly on practice, and tho' it may be said that practice arises from faith, it may be answered that it is much more certain to arise from reason and interest—teach men that it is their interest to be virtuous, and you need no longer lead them by their imagination, and yet there are many good sort of people, who not being able to give a reason for what they believe, insist upon it that their belief can do no harm; but I say that it does harm by making any one believe it can do good. All doctrines of religion rest nearly on the same grounds, viz.—the faith of those who receive them, for they are by their nature incapable of proof; but the excellence of moral precepts may be proved by their practical utility; they require, therefore, no extraneous aid, and have their best safeguard in the common sense and common interest of mankind; they are less liable to be affected by the customs of different nations, and being also of general utility, are more certain of general acceptance;

on these there has hitherto been little difference of opinion, and that difference is not likely to be increased, but the disputes of theologians have not only for ages kept the world at variance, but deluged it with blood. When all different sects and religions are disengaged from establishments, it will then be seen what they can do for themselves, they will then submit to a genuine test of their authenticity. Morality, or the religion of reason, requires no such test; it has already been sufficiently proved, and is never in danger but when protected by religious interference, because all religions tend to make men substitute faith for morality. The principal cause why positive institutions have hitherto been more regarded than moral precepts, is that the former are authoritatively commanded by the voice of an individual, claiming for himself a divine commission, while the other are only to be collected from the general sense of mankind.

The moral principles which have been supposed to require the aid of religion, are in all countries nearly the same, which is a proof that they are fixed and indispensable in their nature; while the religions which support them are various as the climates of the globe, and extravagant as the fancies of their differ-

ent authors. Morality is founded on the reason of mankind, and has for its object the general advantage. Religion is founded on their folly, in pretending to dive into that which they can never comprehend, and is converted into a gainful trade, for a particular set of individuals; the one is simple and uniform, the other is various, mutable, and confused. We neither know, nor can know, the intentions of the Supreme Being, because we are ignorant of his nature, and without he is a man like ourselves, which the ignorant generally conceive him, there can be no such a thing as a revelation of his will; for we have not faculties to comprehend a divine intelligence. We talk of inspiration, and yet know nothing about the nature of spirit, or how it acts upon matter; a revelation, therefore, from a Being whose nature we are unacquainted with, is a contradiction in terms. There can be no evidence of a supernatural agency acting upon the mind of man, without it enables him to tell with certainty things which could not otherwise be known, and there is nothing in either the Old or New Testament which can bear such a test, for all that is there declared to be foretold, is dark and ambiguous, and capable of almost any interpretation, and all

that is said to have happened contrary to the established laws of nature, is incapable of proof, because it contradicts the experience of our senses, which are the only medium of knowledge or evidence. Every religion has its Bible, and all are equally at variance with reason, and equally indebted to credulity ; reason is the only true Bible of man, and all that is above or contrary to reason, is no object of his faith. Religion has done more harm than good to mankind, because it has been the subject of contention, rather than the parent of peace. If there had been only one religion in the world, it might have been useful ; the variety, not only of religions, but of sects, has destroyed the utility of them all. Priests are essentially intolerant when their spiritual opinions are connected with their temporal power ; it is in vain, therefore, to hope for social harmony, till they cease to be distinguished from the laity.

The doctrine of uncorrupted reason, or, as it is called, Atheism, has at all times been proscribed as injurious to the very existence of society, while in fact, it is only injurious to the existence of religion ; to say that men cannot exist without religion, is to a certain extent to proscribe the use of reason. Freethinking is

supposed to be incompatible with morality, but this can only be by such as confound Free-thinkers with those who never think at all, for to think and act agreeably to reason is the only true foundation of morality. Cicero says, " If you remove the worship of the Gods, all confidence and union among men, and even justice itself will be removed."—*De Nat. Deorum* 2. It is difficult to see how a belief in such gods as those of the heathens, and even the God of the christians, can uphold faith and justice more strongly than reason and mutual interest,—this truth, tho' hidden under a load of error accumulated from age to age, will sometimes dare to shew itself to pure and unadulterated minds, and of this we see many specimens both in ancient and modern times.— Many of the ancient philosophers saw it by no means indistinctly, and many of the moderns, notwithstanding their religion, have had glimpses of light flash upon them from the free exercise of their reason. In order to prove the necessity of religion to a state, the prevalence of immorality and every species of corruption in France has been produced as an unanswerable argument. I will first ask, whether in states that are more outwardly religious, there is less of vice and immorality ?—

and I will then attempt to prove that the immorality of France arises not from the want of religion, but from other and more powerful causes. That corrupt religion which prevailed in France before the revolution, a religion which sanctioned so many follies and iniquities, threw those who were disgusted with them into the opposite extreme, and led them to suppose that nature had placed no bounds to the indulgence of their appetites, and that those placed by society were only the invention of legislators for their own selfish purposes, and not for the common interest. The next great cause of immorality, is the ignorance of the true principles of morality and social intercourse, or a selfish and short-sighted view of the nature of society.

Men who have not been early instructed in the nature and foundation of moral obligation, will not easily acquire very correct notions of them afterwards ; they cannot acquire correct or enlarged views of society after they have begun to mix with the world ; they will, therefore, act only on the selfish, short-sighted, narrow principle of temporary interest, and consider the immediate gratification of their passion as the only true wisdom, and the only object of their lives, whereas, if they were

taught in their earliest youth that the interest of individuals is inseparable from that of the whole, and that no man can injure others without ultimately injuring himself, their principal endeavor throughout life would be to do good to others. The force of early impressions is such, that some men who are at present crafty, subtle, voluptuous, avaricious, tyrannical, or debauched, might have been altogether the reverse of what they are. The chief cause of the immorality of France, and of all other countries, is the want of moral education.

Among the many evils which even the most blind and prejudiced will acknowledge to exist in the present state of society, the condition of servants is by no means the least. I do not, however, agree with a celebrated philosopher,* that the evil is without remedy, nor do I expect to be smiled at for my simplicity, in attempting to deprive it of its sting, for what is it that makes the condition of servants deplorable, but the ill-treatment they receive from their masters, and whence does that arise but from not duly considering their state of

* Godwin's Enquirer.

mutual dependence? There is nothing contradictory to reason, nor offensive to humanity, in the mere idea of subserviency, for we are all subservient one to another in various ranks and degrees, and surely the servant who is supplied with every comfort, and is also enabled to save from his wages the means of future subsistence, is not more pitiable than an inferior tradesman or a hired mechanic. Let us strive to enlighten the minds of masters and servants on the nature of their relative duties, or that conduct which each has a right to expect from the other, and there will then surely be no greater hardship in being the servant of an individual, than a servant of the public—a man who can hardly call his time or talents his own, when they are in a state of perpetual and hired activity. The housekeeper in a great family has generally a more comfortable life than the mistress of a great inn, and a gentleman's gentleman is often more his own master than a lawyer in full practice. The difference, it will be said, is great, because the one is making a fortune, and the other is earning a mere subsistence; the fact is true, but the difference is very little to the feelings of the person, because they are each by habit adapted to their situation, and the one may

be as well content with moderate, as the other with excessive gain. Even the utmost severity of a master can make very little difference in their feelings, such is the effect of custom, and where a master is kind and considerate, the balance of happiness will most probably be on the side of the servant, against the innkeeper or lawyer.

A philosopher, sitting coolly in his study, and contemplating the human race thro' a telescope of his own making, may fancy that the feelings of all men in similar situations are the same; but the fact is otherwise, for the feelings of men depend much on their habits, and therefore those of a man who has been born, and of one who is reduced to be a servant, will be very different, and the former are often happier than their masters and mistresses; so that the compassion which is kindly bestowed on them, is often extremely misapplied. The great evil to be lamented in society, is the present state of servants, not the existence of servitude; but until their superiors are reformed, their habits and condition will never be improved, nor their evil dispositions rooted out; it is not a vice in their nature, but the effect of their situation, for men are the creatures of circumstances, and acquire their

ideas from those by whom they are surrounded. The education of the poor must be improved, and the behavior of the rich to their inferiors must be altered ; before the latter can expect good and faithful servants ; at present they have totally seperate interests, and they are distinguished on the one side by rapacity, dishonesty, impertinence, deceit, and treachery, and on the other by tyranny, illiberality, oppression, injustice, and cruelty. From this picture it admits not of a doubt, that both sides require a proportional improvement before they can be satisfied with each other, and this improvement must originate in the attention of the higher ranks to the education of the poor—an education which shall teach them, that their real interest depends on their integrity and respectful behavior, and when they find these expectations fulfilled, they will in time become a different race of beings. They must be taught also by example, as well as by precept, for the morality of servants depends greatly on the morality of their masters ; but when they have neither example nor precept to aid them in the performance of their duty, we must not wonder if they are in general grossly deficient, nor expect of them to be proof against temptations which they

see that their superiors never attempt to resist. Servants, like children, are generally what we make them; if they are well brought up, and treated kindly, they will be grateful in return, and such treatment they have a right to expect from the relation in which they stand to us. Their wages they receive for the mere service they perform, but to kindness they are entitled as fellow-men, as fellow-citizens, and fellow-christians, and even if they are ungrateful or ungenerous, it is our duty, after rebuking, to pardon their offences, not only unto seven times, but unto seventy times seven, or at least till experience has convinced us, that they cannot be reformed. We should consider them as men of like passions and feelings with ourselves, and endeavor, by all the means in our power, to unite their interest to ours; for while they are taught to consider themselves as a separate class, they will have separate interests, and think that whatever they can take from their masters is gained to themselves. The case will be very different when masters reward them in proportion to their fidelity, and prove themselves grateful for faithful service, lenient to their faults, and studious of their comfort. The reverse of all this is the general

conduct of the world, for servants are considered by many people as a distinct race of beings, formed solely for *their* use, and subservient to *their* pleasure, and tho' they are obliged to pay them wages, yet, from that circumstance, they think themselves entitled to all they can require. By such people, servants are treated like negroes, incapable of improvement; their faults are not the effect of their situation, they say, but the vice of their nature. Has the experiment of civilization ever been fairly tried with either? and yet there are instances among both, where gentle treatment, and moderate instruction have produced virtues, of which the most refined natures only are supposed to be capable. We have had instances of affectionate attachment in servants, to those who have lost or been deserted by their friends,—of servants, who in the hour of distress, have shared their slender pittance with their masters,—of servants who have braved even danger and death in following the fortunes of those to whom they have been attached. Let us not then hastily abandon the whole rank as incapable of improvement, or by such cruel ideas of human nature, widen the separation which society has placed between those who give, and those

who receive wages, but let us strengthen the bonds of interest by the ties of affection, and treat those who by chance are our inferiors, as if they were by nature our equals; and when we expect gratitude, let us not forget benevolence. On the other hand, let it be remembered, that servants, like children, may be spoilt by neglect, and by indulgence; when they are suffered to do wrong without reproof or control, they will acquire habits of vice and idleness, and become vile and worthless.

Exceptions, no doubt, are to be found to this account of the general treatment of servants, but these are to be attributed rather to the temper of the persons they serve, than to any sense of duty arising from a knowledge of the relations which men hold to each other, for even those who behave most kindly to their servants, seem to consider them as their natural inferiors, and speak of them as such.— Their general expressions are “the creatures,” “the man,” “the woman.” “the poor girl,” or “the fellow.” Such words convey little idea of mutual dependence, or social regard, and are only stronger proofs than any before adduced, that the relative duties between masters and servants are little understood, and seldom performed. Viewing the state of ser-

vants, from the uppermost in a great nobleman or gentleman's family, to the lowest solitary drudge at three pounds a year, I have no hesitation in saying, that, with a few exceptions, there is much room for amendment. The pampered minions of a great house are often taken, for their personal appearance, from the lowest state of poverty and ignorance, and suddenly exalted to liveried splendor and pompous idleness, to stand as the gaudy puppets of parade behind a splendid vehicle of fashion, or fill up the useless attendance of a rout or a dining-room. The rest of their day is spent in gaming, intriguing, and quarrelling, to get rid of the listless languor of idleness; they are the panders of their master's lusts, and the slaves of their caprices, and when, by this sort of life, they are sufficiently spoilt, and become worthless and saucy, they are turned out of their palaces, to be hanged or transported. Against such servitude, which is only serving an apprenticeship to vice, well might the philosopher exclaim with indignation and regret, and while he only laments the present state of servants, I will heartily join him; but when he considers their existence in society as an obstruction to that state of pure equality which he delights to contem-

plate, I must smile at his visionary theory.

To examine all the gradations of servitude, and to remark their different defects, is by no means requisite; enough has been said generally to be applied to every state, and more will be said to the same purpose. When masters and mistresses are inattentive to the morality and mental condition of their servants, and consider them as mere instruments of their pleasures or their pomp, they must not wonder if they are ungrateful, dishonest, or unprincipled; yet they who have accused them of these vices, have repeated their complaints to each other with so much self-complacency and success, as hardly to believe it possible, that for all these ill qualities in their servants, they themselves are to blame. Let us, however, only consider the relative situations of the two parties.—Society is but a great family, in which the interests of the whole, and of individuals, well understood, are mutual; whoever, therefore, is too eager in pursuit of his own interest, to the prejudice of others, does harm to himself in the end, because he gives an example, which, if generally followed, would be injurious to individuals. The consideration, therefore, of general consequences, which has been so often and

so ably enforced, is the great ground-work of morality in all the various ranks of society ; it is strongly applicable to those of whom I am treating, and were this generally violated, the œconomy of the whole would be disturbed. Masters and servants stand to each other in the relations of informed and ignorant ; the latter, therefore, have a right to be instructed, and it is the duty and interest of the former to instruct them, either before or after they enter their service. Ignorance of our true interest is the great mental want of mankind in all ranks of life, but most prevalent in the lower, from a defect in the means of instruction, and the pressing nature of their necessities, which induces them to believe, that that which immediately lies before them is the most for their interest, without any consideration of consequences. The great distinction between ignorance and knowledge, is only that one man knows more and sees farther than another. Their wants are fewer than those of their superiors, but their means of gratifying them are more coarse, more direct and obvious ; they are less under the restraints of shame and public opinion, and they have less to suffer from a reverse of fortune. From all these considerations, it is evident

that their minds must be enlightened by a sense of duty arising from a knowledge of their true and ultimate interest, before they can be expected to be faithful or honest; at present they are often hired for insufficient wages, ill-treated, and ill-fed, and consequently are deprived of those means of improvement which a different treatment might afford.

Had Mr Godwin been a little better acquainted with that rank of people whose lot he seems so mistakenly to commiserate, he would have spared his pity for those who better deserve it, and probably have omitted a chapter in his book which does him no credit, either as a man or a philosopher. His censure, in the first place, is too general, for there are servants as well as masters of all ranks. The servants of the higher ranks are far from being so meanly lodged and fed as Mr Godwin asserts; there are many of them whose time is more at their own disposal, and whose whole lot is little inferior to that of gentlemen; they have leisure, and they have the means of improvement, but they do not all employ them, and so far from being regarded in no better light than mere *automata*, they are treated with consideration and respect; I do not say that this is the case with all, but certainly with

so many as to make Mr Godwin's general censure, unjustly severe. The wealth of servants differ like those of their masters, but it can by no means be said, that the wages of those among the higher ranks are too small, tho' among the middle ranks they certainly are. The mind, like the body of man, can happily accommodate itself to almost any situation ; so far, therefore, are servants from cherishing either "a burning envy or an unextinguishable hatred" in their bosoms, that there are few of them who are not content with their lot, except they happen to fall in the way of some benevolent philosopher, who kindly tells them they are wretched. No person can be a good servant who does not take a pleasure in his work, and consider his master's interest as his own, which in fact it is, for his wages are the reward of his time and attention, and if the wages are his own, that for which he is paid must be so too, while he is about it—the more faithfully a servant performs his duty, the more his interest and that of his master become indentified—Were servants more accustomed to think, it would be better both for their masters and themselves—Happiness is very fortunately dependant solely on the constitution and habits of the mind, and is not re-

strained to one set of ideas, nor to one state of life. Many a servant has as great pleasure in cooking a dinner or nursing a child, as a philosopher has in writing a book, and could philosophers only imagine that there is such a thing as happiness, out of the sphere within which alone they have conceived it to reside, they would let those rest quiet who do not suffer positive misery, and, for ought they know, may enjoy greater happiness than themselves. The condition of servants, like all other conditions, certainly admits of great improvement, and there is no doubt that it has and will keep pace with the improving spirit of the times, but Mr Godwin goes too far in wishing to subvert all distinctions of rank, and reduce all men to civil and moral equality. Men who seem bent on new-modelling the whole of society, give much room to suspect that the greatest evil it contains is within their own bosoms, and when they talk of "burning envy and deep-rooted hatred," it must be supposed they judge of others by themselves; for why should a servant, who has every comfort he wishes for, envy the lot of his master? or why should we suppose that they envy their superiors more than other ranks of mankind? The fact is, they do not, and both parties are ca-

lumniated by a set of men who wish well to neither. The lot of servants, even in their present state, is far from being pitiable ; they have their conversation, their amusements, and their comforts ; they have every thing requisite for them, provided without any thought or trouble of their own ; they know not the cares of a family, nor the miseries with which their masters are many times beset ; they have their minds and their bodies constantly employed, and have therefore no time for the pains of imagination, nor the languor of *ennui* ; they sleep sound after wholesome labor, and they rise up refreshed to pursue their daily task ; every little recreation to them has a double relish, and they are cheerful, because they have no time to invent imaginary wants ; they are happy when they know their duty, and perform it, and have no thoughts beyond the sphere in which they are employed ; I speak this of the generality. Taking a fair estimate of the state of servitude in England, I have no hesitation in affirming, that there is no intolerable hardship in the condition of a servant, when the relative duties it imposes are well understood, and that considering the state of mutual dependence, in which human society will most probably for ever remain, the

services of one part of mankind can no more be dispensed with, than those of another.

The consequences to be deduced from all that has hitherto been said concerning the leading principles of society, the civil, religious, and military institutions, which have been transmitted, with little variation, from the times of feudal superstition and tyranny, contain no very flattering representation of the present state of things. But without returning to a state of nature, which some men of warm imagination and lively sensibility, disgusted with present evils, have hastily, and I will add, foolishly, suggested, it is possible that a more improved state of society may yet arrive, in which, without overturning the distinction of ranks, or equalizing the possession of property, much good may be obtained, and many oppressive evils removed. The principal injuries which result from the institutions above mentioned, consist in diminishing the respect which is due to virtue and talents, and by attaching it to rank and wealth, keeping mankind at a distance from each other, by the artificial distinctions of title, and the too powerful influence of money, and preventing that free intercourse of opinion, by which alone all ranks can be enlightened and improved.

From the palace to the cottage, there are numerous gradations, and it is well that there should be; but it is not well that these distinctions should inspire one man with a contempt for another, particularly in those cases where the shades of difference between them are so slight as hardly to be perceived. To those who possess virtue, talents, or accomplishments, their rank in life should be no obstacle to their being admitted into the company of any other, and those who possess none of these qualities, deserve not to be shielded from contempt, in whatever station they are placed.

The contention which is excited for wealth and honors, is a natural consequence of the extravagant consideration in which these things are held, and since men are no longer able to subvert each other by open violence, they are compelled to resort to deception and fraud, and endeavor to gain the object of their hopes by secret attacks. It is not then to be wondered, that upon a nearer view of society, it should be found to be *A system of plunder throughout*, nation robbing nation, and individuals robbing each other, all eager for riches and honors, no man truly a friend to another when their interests come in competition, professing kindness, to answer their own purposes,

flattering to deceive, jealous of others, and not happy themselves, envious even of the merest trifles. The rich are proud and insolent, debauched, profligate, and unprincipled ; the poor, ignorant and ungrateful ; the middle ranks, hard-hearted and illiberal, spending their time and their money in gross indulgence ; courtiers, smooth and deceitful ; merchants, avaricious and selfish ; the young profligate, and the old severe ; religion lost in ceremonies, and her ministers in the search after preferment ; morality little respected, and learning frequently wasted in idle disquisitions ; women the gaudy puppets of shew and vanity ; children uneducated, and turned loose upon the world, to make their way as chance or passion guides ; taxes oppressive, and the poor starving ; the fruits of industry squandered to keep the world at war, and knaves fattening, whilst honest men starve and die. For my own part, I can truly say that I have sacrificed much for the good of others, and my reward has been ingratitude and unkindness. I have not, however, given up the world in despair, I trust that others who are disposed to shew kindness to their fellow-creatures may be more fortunate than I have been. I am not yet weary of well-

doing, for I am certain that there are some honest men in the world; all are not ungrateful, proud, cruel, selfish, and unkind.

The pleasures and advantages which society is capable of affording when loosened from the restraints of artificial connections, and the cultivation of reason is not suppressed in any set of men, out of respect for the privileges of others, tho' they may never be fully enjoyed in our time, may yet be contemplated at a distance, without danger, and with benevolent delight. The reason which Nature has given us, is the same in all men, and equally capable of cultivation for the common purposes of life; why then should that faculty be suffered to lie dormant in any man, and his mind be left a barren waste? I am not contending for an equal degree of polish and refinement in all—a thing perhaps impossible in any state of society; I am only desirous that the rational faculties of men should be so cultivated, as to enable them to know their duty and their interest, to prevent them being the dupes or slaves of others, and coming under the denomination of what is contemptuously called the mob. It is, therefore, by no means a thing indifferent, that the people should be civilized, for they will then be less liable to be deceived

by their superiors, or excited to insurrection and tumults, which always terminate against their own interest.

While we lament the degradation of the poor, we have little cause to be satisfied with the general refinement of the rich ; they are slaves to the most contemptible passions, and, except in their manners, are hardly superior to their meaner dependants. They are, in many cases, equally the dupes of artifice and flattery, and little better qualified to judge for themselves ; they are generally governed by the opinion of a few who mould them to their purpose, and if they can enjoy their pleasures and voluptuous delights, they care not who governs nor who obeys ; they are equally destitute of public spirit and private virtue, and if vulgarity may be considered a characteristic of the mind, they are more vulgar than the lowest of the populace. The perpetual disguise which interest, custom, or politeness make it requisite for every man to put on in company, takes away considerably from the ease and comfort of mixed society ; it is therefore only in friendly circles, where such are to be found, that the pleasures of rational conversation are ever enjoyed ; for where all men are engaged in a struggle for the same object, it

becomes a point of prudence to disguise as much as possible their sentiments, views, and tempers from each other. The great art of polite conversation is never to be serious, to make trifles agreeable, and to say a great deal about nothing. To penetrate through this disguise, and to see men as they are, is to know the world; it is the fruit of long experience, and of much observation. Without diminishing in any degree the restraints of politeness, or introducing that vulgar familiarity which people in low stations mistake for good breeding, I am anxious that they should proceed from a purer source than they do at present, and that deceit should not be the only motive for complaisance. The first principle of politeness is to consult the feelings of those with whom we converse, and to disguise our own when they are likely to give offence; such a conduct is not inconsistent with virtue, and as far from rudeness as from the artificial polish which disguises selfishness and ignorance.

Tho' it is much to be wished that no such stupid remnant of aristocratical distinction were to be found, as visits of ceremony, and that every vestige of useless restraint were banished from society, yet it is by no means requisite,

that the intercourse of men with each other should degenerate into the coarseness of a bear-garden, or that all the decencies and elegancies of life should be swept away by the rude hand of reform. The mind of man cannot always be employed on grave and serious subjects ; to trifle at times is not beneath his dignity, provided it be done with decency and good breeding, yet to be constantly bent on avoiding every thing serious, and cautious of delivering an opinion on common occasions, savors too much of that selfish concealment which destroys the confidence of social intercourse, and keeps men at a distance from each other. Men and women who are qualified for rational enjoyment, should meet together for that purpose, without disguise and without restraint ; they should interchange their ideas and amuse their minds, instead of merely retailing the stale topic of news, of talking agreeable nonsense, or gazing upon pieces of painted paper ; they should meet to become better acquainted with each other, and to be not only amused, but improved. The improvement of intellect, or advancement in knowledge, is the great purpose of rational beings, and without a constant approximation to it, all our time is mispent. Men are in

general so ignorant, so selfish, and so vulgar, that in all this great world there are few who can truly esteem each other, for if knowledge, virtue, and integrity are the true foundations of esteem, it is not to be wondered, when these are found mixed in such small proportions in the human character, that even the meanest of mankind should entertain for their fellow-creatures hardly any feelings but those of contempt.

The picture which has here been drawn of society may be said to be much overcharged in its colouring, and of too sombre a cast, to give a just idea of the original. Let it be remembered, however, that those who are mere spectators of the world, and reflect much on what they see and hear, without mixing in the busy crowd, are more likely to form a just estimate of the scene, than those who, being constantly amused or employed, have little leisure for reflection either on themselves or others. Their minds are too much and too constantly agitated, they are too much under the influence of early impressions, to take an extensive or impartial view of things, and therefore they have little idea, that those things to which they have been long accustomed, either can or ought to be otherwise than they are at present.

The distance and the separation which exist between the different ranks of society, are not evils so great as are the mode, the object, and the effect of the intercourse between those whom the laws of custom permit to meet together. The great object of man, however diversified by habits or institutions, is happiness, or the indulgence of his passions and appetites. In every age and country there has been some prevailing principle by which this purpose has been thought to be promoted; some nations have been warlike, others commercial, and others have acted under the influence of honor, patriotism, or religion; perhaps at no time was the love of virtue solely predominant, and most probably it never will be, tho' it is much to be desired that public and private interest could be brought to harmonize more amicably with each other. That union, however, seems very distant, for there never was a period when the pursuits of men were more grossly selfish, nor the influence of virtuous principles was less felt, than the present. All are looking to their own emolument,—to place, power, and riches,—all are impatient to outstrip each other in the great contest for wealth and pleasure. When men thus disposed, meet together, can their con-

versation be either rational or improving? Impossible! A perpetual study to disguise their actual intentions, and to talk upon trifling subjects, is the first rule of conversation among all ranks. To begin with the metropolis, and descend to the meanest village in the country, there are very few instances in which it can be said that men derive much advantage from the company of each other. It is in London, if any where, that every kind of society is to be met with, and it is there in its best and its worst state; yet even in London there is little of that friendly intercourse, without which there can be no comfort in society, and hardly any thing in life worth possessing. Literary men, in every department of science, are daily to be met with, and he that wishes for information such as the most enlightened converse can impart, may find a rich repast for every day's enjoyment; yet this is not unalloyed with many serious evils, for among literary men, as among other men, there are jealousies, heartburnings, and resentments; there is pride and vanity, and self-importance; there is a love of contention, a fondness of argument, and a desire to dazzle rather than to convince. In general, however, among men of talents, the greatest intellectual pleasures of conversation

are to be found ; for where good manners, good sense, and learning are united, with a desire to please, to give and to receive information, accompanied with a talent for pleasantry and humor, and where a confidence can be reposed in the opinions and integrity of those with whom we converse, there can surely be no greater gratification to a well-organized mind than such society ; but real friendship is scarcely to be found. The great generally spend their time in one continued round of frivolous dissipation ; among them, therefore, we are not to look either for instruction or pleasure to a rational mind ; their conversation consists of nothing more than idle badinage, empty railly, or loose pleasantry. They seek not for information, or rather they reject it, and if a man does but know, by having acquired the fashionable stile of trifling, how to make his trifles agreeable, it is all that is required of him as a passport into what is called the best company. It would be well, however, if the communication of the higher ranks with each other consisted only in trifling, but trifling cannot always amuse, and they whose minds require some strong *stimulus* to give a relish to their enjoyments, if they are not inclined to good, must inevitably be doing ill. Gaming

drinking, and intrigue, are sufficient to keep the minds of those in a state of perpetual irritation who have not formed a taste for rational pursuits; these, therefore, fill up the time, and furnish the means of society to many whose hours cannot be otherwise employed. Decency has forbid to women the indulgence of the second, but the two others seem to afford an ample compensation for the loss, and it will be rather difficult to find exceptions among women of fashion, to an immoderate indulgence in those most fatal propensities.—Even among these who are said to spend their time innocently, their hours of employment are only consumed in frivolous accomplishments, and their hours of amusement in thoughtless dissipation,—so little relish is there for rational society. The man of fashion of the present day is a listless, languid, contemptible being, who seems to enjoy nothing, and to care for no one but himself. He is a disgusting compound of vanity, affectation, and impertinence. To say and do the most rude things with an air of indifference, is a privilege allowed to the man who is either born in an elevated station, or has the good fortune to be admitted into what is called high life, and for this high honor it is not requisite to be well born, nor even

to be well educated ; it is sufficient to be completely worthless, to possess a certain portion of impudence, and to be known to a few of the most eminent fashionables, that is, people who can do any thing they please, and never please to do any thing they ought. Did I choose to descend to personal satire, I might name many persons, who, without one estimable quality, or even birth to recommend them, are permitted to figure in all the most fashionable circles, and to become the familiar companions of the great, with whom they live, mutually despising and despised.

The whole life of the great is a state of hostility to nature and reason ; they turn night into day, health into sickness, and summer into winter ; they spend the former in town, and the latter in the country. They are not satisfied with the seasonable productions of nature, but she must be forced and exhausted to gratify their pampered and fanciful appetites ; art is ransacked to supply them with variety, and when even wealth cannot purchase them a new pleasure, they sit down with weariness and disgust, to court the old ones drest in new forms, while the very phantom they pursue is perpetually flying before them, and eluding their grasp. Pleasure,

alas! they know but by name, for the pleasures of sense and vanity soon become stale and vapid, and their minds being unaccustomed to any other, they are unable to find enjoyment in virtue or in knowledge. The charms of nature in rural landscape, of society in rational conversation, or of solitude in pleasing contemplation, yield them no satisfaction; nothing but a perpetual succession of company (not to call it society), can preserve them from that most dreadful of all punishments, being left to themselves or their own families, for when connections are formed, as they generally are in high life, without any regard to congeniality of tempers or pursuits, can any thing be more distressing than a matrimonial *tete a tete*, or a family party. If they die a premature death in the midst of life and pleasure; if they linger out a wretched existence of pain and punishment; if they leave an unhealthy posterity the heirs of their diseases, and the victims of their debauchery, is it to be wondered at, or to be considered as the natural consequence of the false notions they have formed of enjoyment? No doubt, by their want of moderation, they shorten the duration and diminish the intensity of their pleasure. London, great, profligate, and in-

famous as it is, hardly feels more from the dissipation of the great, than the country ; it suffers both from the want of them, and from their presence, for when they are there they corrupt their neighbors by their example, and when they are not there they drain the country of its wealth, and leave it nothing but poverty and ignorance. Should it be thought that I have said too much on the profligacy of the great, when there is so little hope of their amendment, it will not be denied that it is of infinite importance, tho' the efforts of philosophy are weak against the united force of fashion, habit, riches, authority, and luxury.

The vices and follies of the great are unfortunately not peculiar to themselves, for they descend in different degrees to their inferiors ; so that it will be difficult to find, among any rank of people, that pleasant and improving intercourse which ought ever to be found among rational beings : for even those whose minds have received superior improvement are compelled, in their commerce with the world, to descend to the vulgar occupations of the generality, and if they do not wish to be thought pedantic, they must talk of horses, and scandal, and nonsense,—must drink and

play cards, and trifle, like the meanest fool in company. It is, indeed, hardly possible to conceive a more degraded state of society than that which is to be found in mixed companies, where form and ceremony are preserved during stated hours,—where cards and the bottle fill up the whole of the meeting, and the conversation is only upon topics that are general and indifferent. How can it be otherwise, when people meet merely to kill time? A dinner party is generally as stupid as a quaker's meeting, till the company begins to feel the inspiration of the bottle, and a rout is a mixed rabble, which the lady of the house endeavours to make as crowded as possible, for two very important reasons; the first is, to get them all over at once, and the next, to have it said that she gives larger parties than any lady of her acquaintance. Thus people meet together to stare at those they dont know, to talk nonsense with those they do, to lose their temper, their time, and their money, and this is called genteel society, but as to social intercourse, that is completely banished, if ever such a thing existed.—So much for the state of conversation, and I believe the picture is so far faithful that it is impossible for a rational mind to conceive any thing more degrading to ra-

tionality than what is called genteel society. In country towns and remote provinces, they are only the awkward imitators of more fashionable prattle.

Having now spoken of the state of conversation among the higher and middle ranks, I will offer a few remarks on their amusements and employments. The amusements of individuals, tho' they cannot always be serious and important, may at least be innocent, and worthy of rational beings; they should, therefore, neither be cruel nor vulgar. I doubt this cannot be said of those which fill up the time of the generality. Tho' balls are a ridiculous method of spending time, it is not to be inferred that dancing is the same, for when young people meet together to be gay and cheerful, they naturally express that gaiety in more than common activity: dancing, therefore, without preparation, in the open air or in cool apartments, is a lively amusement and a wholesome exercise,—the latter it never can be in crowded ball-rooms, where the atmosphere is saturated with the effluvia of many hundred persons, not all of them healthy. To shew a fine dress, to look out for admiration, and to indulge a contemptible vanity, are the chief motives which take women to balls; to talk

nonsense and dissipate their time, are the chief motives of the men ; such meetings, therefore, are neither useful nor harmless,—they enervate the mind without affording even innocent amusement, and fatigue the body without the good effects of exercise. Dancing was considered by the Romans as a merititious art when set off with studied graces ; it is little better now, and should therefore be restrained to the theatre, where elegant attitudes and varied postures can alone be displayed with propriety, and where professional excellence is a veil for indecency.

The love of public amusements is so strongly prevalent in the present age, that the performance, be what it will, is only a pretence for meeting together : it is a pity that the arts should be so treated, but it will not be otherwise till our youth of both sexes are better educated,—till they are taught to consider amusement inseparable from virtue, and even in their lightest sports to have a view to some useful purpose. Music, both vocal and instrumental, when it is calculated to interest the feelings, and to touch the heart, is a pleasing and innocent recreation ; what then can be more disgusting than to see the finest performances attended by a rude or insipid multitude,

who disturb the enjoyment of others, and feel none themselves: Our taste in this art has indeed somewhat degenerated, and execution, both in playing and singing, is more admired than melody and expression. Thus one of the great uses of music is lost, for when the ear or the eye is to be surprised, rather than the soul melted or elevated, with the various expressions of pathos, sweetness and grandeur, music, instead of an useful, becomes an insignificant art. The singer whose notes are the highest, not the sweetest, is now most admired, and the wonders, rather than the beauties of the art, are applauded. Fine singing, like rope-dancing, is more wonderful than pleasing, for the performer puts the audience in a perpetual state of anxiety. The music which pleases men of feeling, is to be preferred before that which pleases merely men of taste; the one can be understood by all, the other only by a few. Handel is the Milton of music; he is sublime, pathetic, and animating; he has genius, science, taste, harmony, and melody, and he who is not pleased with Handel, may profess to be a connsisœur, but his taste is little to be envied. Modern music is like modern poetry; it has no substance, no body, no matter in it; it is light and showy, but it

will not bear frequent repetition; it may please at first, but it cannot please long, which is the strongest proof that its merits are not solid.—Concerts, when well selected, and well performed, are an agreeable and an innocent amusement, to those who *are* amused, but as a mere refuge from idleness, they are only useful because they prevent, for the time at least, something worse. Whether gentlemen should perform in public, is a question which has often been debated, and can only be decided by fashion. When it becomes customary for gentlemen to do so, they may do it safely, for being among those things in which there is no moral turpitude, nor positive inconvenience, its propriety or impropriety must depend entirely on opinion; yet whether gentlemen should give up much of their time to music and musicians, is much more easily determined.

The theatre has been called by some the school of virtue, and by others the school of vice; this will, in a great measure, depend upon the manner in which it is conducted; at present, however, it may be justly called *The School of Folly*. If it has not the licentiousness of Congreve's time, it has not his vivacity and humor, and to a man of common

sense, it can hardly afford either instruction or entertainment. The perpetual thirst of the public for novelty is, in some measure, the cause of this degraded state of the stage, for when people will not be satisfied with nature, which is ever the same, tho' she takes different shapes, they must be content with the *Proteus* form of folly ; and content indeed they seem to be, if we are to judge from the fulness of the houses, and the applause with which the flattest nonsense is represented. Harlequin comedy, low farce, bombastic tragedy, pantomime, and sing song, have taken almost possession of the stage, to the exclusion of sense, nature, and humor. Bad plays and bad actors are all that a man who goes to the play-house to be amused, must expect to see ; till Shakespeare and nature revive, he had better stay at home, or go elsewhere. Whether the stage gives or receives the impression of the times, it is not easy to determine ; at present both are in need of being reformed.

The power of fashion over the conduct of life, is an evil sincerely to be lamented by every man who stands up for the prerogatives of reason and nature, for it is destructive of health, of morals, and of comfort, and tends only to the gratification of vanity. That the

whim or fancy of any individual, from his rank in society, should control and model the dress and amusements of a whole nation, is an infringement on their liberty, and an insult to their taste. The natural proneness of man to imitation, cannot be pleaded in defence of the custom, because it is not meant to deny nor to limit this imitative faculty in any thing which is sanctioned by reason or utility. Fashion is only to be condemned in things which are injurious or inconvenient, and where men submit to positive evil, merely for the sake of doing as others do, we must smile at the folly which deprives them of the power to act or think for themselves. The wish not to be thought ridiculous, prevents many a man from doing what his reason approves, and makes him persist in many things, for which no better reason can be given than that others do the same. For instance, it is the fashion to wear our clothes in winter so thin and unsuitable to the season, that persons of tender constitutions are in perpetual danger of destroying their health, or even risking their lives ; shall fashion, in this case, decide against every other motive? Ridiculous weakness! No man who values his liberty or his reason, will submit to such a tyranny in this, or in any other such

instance. Fashion, perhaps, may induce us to eat or drink till nature is overloaded, and reason oppressed, and by frequent repetition, even health itself is sacrificed. Many a man has suffered for his slavish submission to the follies of others, and repented his weakness when repentance could be of no service. Such is the dominion of fashion over the female sex, that tho' the lightness of their dress perpetually exposes them to the attacks of consumption, and to be more suddenly consumed by fire, yet they had rather submit to the chance of these most dreadful calamities, than deviate in a single article from the strictest law of fashion or frivolity. These things would appear trifling, if their consequences were not serious, but when it is considered how many hundreds of our fair countrywomen yearly fall sacrifices to the tyranny of fashion, no weapon either of argument or ridicule should be suffered to remain idle, if it can be handled with effect to bring them back to a sense of reason and consistency. Whenever fashion is not inconsistent with reason or convenience, whenever novelty introduces something useful or agreeable into our dress, or our houses, let us embrace it with thankfulness, but never let us make ourselves ridiculous, or destroy our com-

fort by adopting a fashion which neither suits our age, our persons, nor our health.

The state of knowledge, tho' considerably advanced within the last century, is yet far from that point at which it may one day arrive ; the fictions and fancies of men are adopted in the room of truth, we even wander in a state of uncertainty as to some of the most common appearances of nature. The cultivation of the mind, without it embraces much useful information, is only specious ignorance ; to know things as they exist in the natural and moral world is the end and object of all study ; great progress has hitherto been made in this knowledge, but we are yet far from the end of our journey ; clouds and mists of error yet hang over the minds of individuals,—they are mere children in understanding, the dupes of artifice, and the slaves of prejudice, in most things which concern even the common affairs of life, and much more so in those things which extend beyond the reach of vulgar apprehension, and so slow is the progress of the mind in forming correct ideas of this, that the wisdom of our ancestors is in many instances considered as folly--which gives room for perpetual innovations. The influence of a few cunning and artful men called statesmen, on the af-

fairs of the world, affords a lamentable proof of the ignorance and corruption of the generality of mankind. On no other subjects is there so much room for improvement in the mind of man as in those of religion and government.—The one is a system of imposture, the other of robbery. Till every man is enabled to judge for himself, and discern the truth in those things which belong to his station, the world can never be said to be completely civilized. Knowledge may be divided into two kinds, primary and secondary; the first is positively useful, the other only ornamental; the one consists in the exercise of reason, and shews things as they are, the other in that of imagination, and shews things that might be, the one relates to facts, the other to speculation; both are worthy the pursuit of intelligent beings, but each in its due proportion. The discovery of truth, on any subject whatever, is of more value to mankind than the richest conquest to any nation upon earth; for it forms a principle, an invariable guide for their future conduct, which, tho' individuals may neglect to employ, can never be lost to the world, and will enable them to act according to the relations of things, and to reject all the false opinions which have hitherto misled

mankind. Men are, in general, so accustomed to follow the beaten track in all subjects, that few discoveries are made in any—and when they are, it is long, very long, before they are generally understood and acknowledged.

Whether the relations of civil society, as at present established, are preferable to the state of wandering savages, is a question which admits of no doubtful decision; whether they are productive of all the happiness and intellectual improvement which society is capable of producing, may, in the opinion of many persons, not be so easily decided. That complete happiness is not within the reach of man, the experience of the world has proved beyond a doubt, and they who make it the immediate object of their pursuit, will find it to be a phantom which continually eludes their grasp, and yet such is our nature, that the indulgence of our sensual appetites will ever be our ultimate desire. Knowledge, or an accurate acquaintance with facts and opinions, has happily a more substantial form, which may be felt and embraced, and they who neglect to pursue it will be unhappy, so far as ignorance can make them; and the miseries of ignorance are, in a general sense, more severe than even those of poverty. The

ignorance of the multitude is the chief cause of their vices, and of the calamities they suffer from their superiors, of wars, seditions, of oppression, of famine, of slavery,—so much so, that the state of the world will never be materially improved till knowledge is more generally diffused, and the multitude are taught to act from a just sense of their own interest rather than from passion and prejudice.

The strongest argument against educating the children of the poor is, that it may tend to make them dissatisfied with their situation, and constantly aiming at a higher; had it this effect, it might justly be considered as dangerous and injudicious; but tho' this may be the case when knowledge is rare among that class, the effect will cease when it becomes more generally diffused, for knowledge, like every thing else, will in time find its level, and go for no more than it is worth. Some few instances there are of superior minds, by the help of a little knowledge, rising from a humble situation to the most elevated, and this is one great advantage of such instruction; but the principal good it produces, is to enable the generality of them to spend their leisure time more rationally and comfortably than many do at present, from their unlettered and savage

ignorance. Let it then never be objected, that it can be dangerous for any set of men to understand their duty and their interest; it may be to those who wish to make them their dupes, but no man who is properly enlightened can ever be the dupe of any individual, or any party.

The state of the poor in all countries that have been long civilized, is a subject which calls loudly for enquiry and amendment; the indifference of the rich to their condition, merits the severest reparation, for tho' they roll in luxury and pomp, they think of them without anxiety or compassion, pining in their miserable dwellings without attendance in sickness, or comfort in health. To see them in their wretched hovels, hardly covered with their filthy rags, and hardly kept alive on the meanest and the coarsest food, while riot, waste, and expence are the boast of their wealthy superiors, who preach to them of patience, gratitude, and forbearance, is a problem which a man of common faculties can hardly solve, without being guilty of what is called impiety. There is, indeed, a spurious kind of charity which shews itself in public subscriptions, where ostentation and vanity have a greater share than benevolence; by this, the

poor are in some measure relieved, but it is not connected with any principle which tends radically to improve their condition, or give them a better place in society. It has always been common with persons in all ranks of life above the condition of poverty, to speak contemptuously of the poor, considering their vices not as the effects of their situation, but of their nature. Such people should rather wonder that so many of the poor are as virtuous as they are with all their privations, and all their temptations.

Coarse selfishness is the leading principle of the world, not that refined self-love which is pleased by giving pleasure to others, but the mere gross indulgence of our appetites and passions, society, therefore, so far from being what it might be, is at best but a state of disguised hostility. To make it otherwise, men must be taught to consider how they can make others happy as well as themselves. They must enquire and reflect how their conduct affects both the individuals. The generality of mankind, it will be said, have not time to enquire; to this it may be answered, that the mere exertion of their reason on common topics, requires no more time than is given to learn the tedious articles of establish-

ed error, for truth is simple and uniform. To be content with things as they are, without examining whether they are right or wrong, is a proof either of a very limited intellect, or a pitiful disposition, for no man existing, be his station what it may, is exempted from the duty of enquiring what good he can do to others. Such an enquiry naturally leads men of fortune and talents, in their different degrees, to consider how far it is in their power to increase the pleasures, or diminish the distresses of their fellow-creatures. That man must have seen little of mankind who is ignorant of human misery, yet such knowledge is not to be acquired by those who converse merely with persons of their own rank ; they must enter into the cottages and garrets of the poor,—they must see them, naked, hungry, and thirsty, exposed to the inclemencies of the weather, to the sudden attacks or the slow wastings of disease ; they must see the effects of their unruly passions, and their grovelling vices, they must be acquainted with all the consequences of ignorance and poverty. Evils like these must be known before they can be remedied, yet the generality of the upper ranks know little what their inferiors suffer,—they are little influenced either by

reason or imagination ; custom is their only guide, and interest their only motive ; they glide along, in the stream of life, doing as they see others do, and therefore thinking they do right ; they are dead to those pleasures which arise from the exercise of the social affections, tho' they live in the full crowd of society, and boast of being acquainted with what they call the world ; but to know the world as they know it, is to be ignorant of mankind ; to keep good company is all they profess, and to move an inch out of that line is said to be affecting singularity. Religion has taught them something about certain imaginary beings who have no personal or even spiritual existence, but it is a sort of knowledge which has no influence upon their lives, except to make them think ill of those who believe otherwise. They know little about the real state of things, or their true relations to beings who have an actual existence ; they are therefore mere *automata*, mere creatures of habit and fashion, without feeling, thought, or reflection. The generality of men think too little ; there are others who think too much, they are too apt to despise the world, and thus loose many of its pleasures ; such men are useful by calling the thoughtless

now and then to reflection, but their lot is by no means enviable. Those who wish to enjoy the world, should not think much about it, for it will not bear reflection.

To a benevolent and thinking man, nothing is more pleasant than the idea of plenty. To know that he has enough for himself and family, and to let others partake of it without injuring his property, or entrenching upon his desire to accumulate, cannot fail of affording the utmost satisfaction. To such a man, the idea of want must be dreadful, he knows, therefore, how to pity those who have hardly sufficient for their daily subsistence--and tho' it happens from the inevitable necessity of things, or according to others, by the ordinance of God, which says that "the poor shall never cease out of the land," yet it must be every good man's wish, that the number of these should be as small as possible. One means of lessening poverty is to lessen waste; I consider waste as a very great crime, for it does nobody good, and it does a great deal of harm both to those who make it, and to those who suffer by it. In the conduct of life there are many little things not much thought of which go to make up the character of a truly good man, and of these nothing is more essential than a tender

regard for other people's property far beyond the bounds of common honesty. There are many who pass in the world for very good sort of people, people who would neither cheat nor steal, and yet would never scruple to waste the property of others with the most thoughtless indifference ; by these people, great is the waste committed at inns and other places of public resort, they knock about, they spoil and abuse without the smallest compunction, what if saved and preserved might do much good; and be the means in the aggregate of sustaining many useful and respectable beings, and thus, I will not say the designs of providence are frustrated, because it would be a poor compliment to providence to say that man could frustrate his designs, but the bounty of nature becomes misapplied. It is a good maxim therefore to teach young persons to be as careful of other people's property as they should be of their own. It is also of great consequence to impress upon the minds of youth, the necessity of calculating before hand, every thing they undertake. Nothing shews so much awkwardness of mind as a want of calculation, and by calculation I mean not merely the knowledge of pounds, shillings, and pence, but the fitness of means for their ends, of persons and

things, of times, places, and circumstances; in short, a moral and prudential calculation, for the whole business of life is a business of calculation. It is a useful and desirable talent, to be able to adapt and suit things to each other so as on all occasions to preserve order, harmony, and proportion.

Poverty is no doubt, one of the greatest evils of life, and when it proceeds from a redundant population, it can only be remedied by giving the poor such a love of cleanliness and comfort as shall be stronger than the dominion of their passions. When poverty proceeds from unavoidable misfortune, it must be left to the discretion of those who have the power and the will to alleviate its severity, but all forced subsistence only aggravates the evil it is intended to remedy. The poor laws of this country are founded on a radical error, and can therefore never answer the purpose for which they were intended, but must become an increasing burthen on the state, and all attempts to modify or improve them will only end in the shame and confusion of those who thus struggle against the decrees of nature. They were framed on the idea, that it is possible to eradicate poverty by parish allowance, and find employment for all the children of the poor,

and by so doing, they hold out inducements to them to marry, with the prospect of having their families maintained by the public. That which they cannot do for themselves, the public cannot do for them, and without increasing the stock of provisions annually raised in the country, in proportion to the increasing numbers of the people, it is impossible to banish poverty from the world, but this, according to the grand fundamental principle of nature, is impossible, for their increase can never be proportionate to each other. To keep population down to a level with the means of subsistence, and raise wages in proportion to the price of provisions, is the great secret for providing for the poor, and whoever exerts himself to this purpose, whether actively or theoretically, is doing a service to mankind, for which future ages will bless him. To limit the accumulation of property, and its too small division, and to prevent the lower ranks from multiplying too fast, are the most likely means of effecting this great purpose, and are consistent in every country with a very numerous population. To give employment to the poor is the best use of riches, and to give them advice how to become industrious and frugal, is the best use of superior knowledge, to con-

vince them that labor is the best sort of property, to persuade them to avoid marriage till they can maintain a family, and to live continently till they can afford to marry, will do more to improve their condition than volumes of divinity, or thousands spent in parish allowance. No man in the middle ranks of society ever thinks of marrying till he has a probability of living comfortably, and why should not the poor be taught to acquire the same foresight? Even the birds of the air have nests, but the poor very often have hardly food or clothing for their young. It is degrading to human nature that man alone should be regardless of his offspring. Some pious people, from a foolish reliance on providence, have promoted this thoughtless tendency to propagate, but it should be more properly called tempting providence than trusting in him. When providence furnishes the means of being comfortable, they who think it right, are in the right to be thankful to him; but to trust in him, without using the common rules of prudence, is either to defy his power, or to rely on him without sufficient ground of reliance. It reminds one of the old fable of Jupiter and the waggoner.

To produce, to distribute, and to enjoy, make

up the sum of human existence ; when these are divided in their due proportions to every member of society, it will have attained, most probably, its utmost possible state of excellence. This division was perhaps more properly apportioned in this country before the late war, than in any other at any period of the world ; but things have been thrown much out of their course by that unfortunate convulsion, and it will be some time before they are settled. A considerable alteration has taken place within the last ten years among all ranks, in their dress, manners, and mode of living ; every thing is changed from solid to shewy,—every thing is sacrificed to outward appearance,—all live to the extent of their income ; more money is circulated, and less is hoarded ; the returns of trade are quicker, and tradesmen are more numerous. The capital of the country is no doubt increased ; but it is not from this circumstance alone that people live more expensively, but because they live more for the present time, and are less anxious about posterity. All are eager to get money, and striving to out-do each other in shew and expence ; hence the numerous and extravagant speculations in trade, which terminate in ruin and poverty. The prevailing vice of the age is

extravagance, the example has been given by the government, and it has extended to the lowest ranks. The virtues of prudence and œconomy are almost extinct, all ranks are fond of shew and expence, and this propensity, if not checked, must lead to the ruin of all moral principle. The ceremonious politeness and genuine hospitality of former times is out of fashion, and, in short, the whole manner of living is less substantial than formerly. Good breeding used to consist in a delicate attention to the feelings of others ; it seems now to consist in nothing but being at ease, and totally disregarding every thing but ourselves. By this change we gain a great degree of freedom, but it is a freedom which is in danger of degenerating into a rude and unpolished barbarism. Attempts have been made and are making to effect a revolution in literary taste, as complete as that which has taken place in our dress and furniture. Pope, Addison, Akenside, and Gray, are degraded to the rank of mere versifiers, without genius, or originality.

Cheap and simple pleasures are not the fashion of the present age ; men are not admired for what they are, but for what they possess, and it is not society that is sought

after, so much as being in company. To be impartial, however, we must allow, that if dress is less solid, it is more simple ; if manners are less ceremonious, they are less formal ; and if our pleasures are more frivolous, they are also less gross than those of our ancestors ; whether we are equally improved in our moral and political attainments, I will not venture hastily to determine. General principles of knowledge, however, are more widely diffused, and more accurately understood, than at any former period ; experiment has taken place of theory, intellectual science has rapidly advanced, and literature has got rid of many incumbrances. The improvements of chemistry have increased the comforts and conveniences of life, and all the arts are proportionably extended, but above all, the empire of reason has been considerably enlarged; for as it was the boast of Socrates to have brought philosophy down from heaven to reside on earth, so it is the boast of the present age to have brought religion to the test of reason, and submitted faith to morality. And yet, notwithstanding that the more intelligent part of society have received considerable improvement by this important change, it cannot be denied that those who never think for them-

selves, and take opinions upon trust, have been no gainers by their neglect of religious principles. Men must either refine their selfish appetites, or act from an imaginary motive of future good, and it has unfortunately happened that they have rejected religion without embracing philosophy, and therefore they had better have remained in the old belief; for it cannot be denied, that tho' the hope of an uncertain futurity is no very rational motive of action, it is with some men, at least, a powerful one, and more refined than that of a mere immediate interest. The decline of religion, among all ranks of those who have adopted no substitute in its room, is a serious evil, and threatens the peace of society. The higher ranks, as they are less religious, have become more regardless of their health, their character, and their fortune; in the height of their prosperity they have no guide of their lives to direct them to acts of charity and benevolence, and in affliction they have no comforter to soothe or soften their calamity. The middle ranks have lost that decent sobriety of conduct which preserved them within the line of moderation and œconomy, and the poor are nearly loosened from all those restraints which taught them their duty to their superiors, and

to be content with the fruits of their own industry. They are more headstrong, more profligate, and more insolent, than at any former period, and tho' there is no doubt that all the relative duties of society may be as well taught and performed on the principles of a pure morality, as on those of any religion whatever, yet when neither of these motives are allowed to operate, the general state of society must be alarmingly disturbed, and this evil can only be remedied by the more general diffusion of knowledge.

The improvement of the people in the present advanced state of the world must no longer be trusted to governments; all that they have now to do is to leave the press free and unrestrained; let them not interfere with education, information, or trade; the ball of knowledge is now set in motion, and it will roll on till it has completed the circumference of the globe, unless it be impeded by external force, and all will go as well as it can, when priesthood and state-craft cease to trouble the affairs of the world. The progress of improvement is slow and imperceptible, for even they who are the instruments of it are seldom conscious of the good they promote, and they who never reason themselves are not proof against the

reason of others. The distinction of family, unsupported by any other claim, has lost its value in the opinion of the world, and riches have taken its place in society. The tales of the nursery are no longer calculated to terrify, and the stories for children are both amusing and instructive. The improvements of agriculture, tho' perhaps carried in some respects beyond the bounds of utility, have contributed greatly to improve the condition of the farmers, but the custom of letting large farms is injurious both to population and comfort, and has introduced a degree of luxury and dissipation among farmers utterly inconsistent with their situation, and as injurious to their landlords as to themselves.

The new system of education has diffused the elements of knowledge more generally among the poor. I will not say that they have as yet been materially improved by it, for to read and write is of little use except as the means of forming the mind to prudence and virtue. Mere knowledge is not education, but the knowledge of what is good ; such knowledge as leads to the practice of sobriety, industry, and œconomy, and teaches them their duty as well as their rights, what they owe to their superiors and their superiors to them, from their

mutual dependence. The principles of morality as arising from the general relations of society, and the British constitution, ought to form a part of the instruction of all public seminaries from the highest to the lowest.

The pleasures and advantages which society, even in its present state affords, are so many and valuable as not to be rashly endangered for the whim or passion of any individual. No revolution but that which arises from the gradual change of habits and sentiments can be desirable; a revolution which subverts in a moment the ancient customs, institutions, and prejudices of a people, is in danger of producing anarchy, and ending in despotism; the history of the two greatest revolutions that ever happened in the world, those of England in 1649, and of France in 1792, justify what is here affirmed. Let every man, who complains of evils, speak only from the result of his knowledge in human affairs, and mistrust all theory which is not sanctioned by experience; he ought to have seen what he laments, or heard from the testimony of the sufferers, their miseries and their grievances, and then, what he relates should be related with coolness and candor, with no desire to exaggerate or to inflame, but merely to inform, to enlighten and

improve. It is no small thing that we enjoy in security the fruits of our industry and the inheritance of our ancestors, the varied pleasures afforded by nature and art, by literature, science, and conversation, the charms of music, statuary, and painting, the delights of distant correspondence, the convenience of travelling with ease and safety, the still greater pleasure of witnessing the prosperity of our friends, and anticipating their future advancement. These are comforts which no virtuous man could wish to see endangered for a moment, by any rash attempts at innovation and reform. On the other hand, such a man who has one honest purpose steadily before him, will not be diverted from it by the false alarms of the selfish or the timid, he will be conscious that morality admits not of many means to effect the same end, and that the only method of producing good to society is that of sober discussion and argument; he will endeavour, therefore, rather to amend than to destroy, and considering that civilized society, even with all its defects, is the produce of ages, he will rather seek to correct the evil it contains, than to tear up the evil and the good together.

The intention and tendency of what has been here said will not, I trust, be mistaken, for

tho' there is a great propensity in mankind to exaggerate what they do not comprehend, and when a thing does not exactly meet their approbation, to make it appear in a light which it does not deserve, yet it can hardly be supposed that the remarks here offered are directed against society in general, or even against those evils which seem to be inseparable from the condition of human nature. The great art of life is to distinguish, for want of which men are perpetually in error and at variance with each other. It is of great importance, to discriminate between those evils which are temporary and casual, and those which are essentially connected with the nature of things. It is for this purpose that I have written; for being fully and firmly of opinion that many of the miseries which at present shorten and disturb our existence, are capable of being removed by the exertion of our reason, I have ventured to suggest to the consideration of thinking and benevolent men, the probable source of many of the evils which exist in the world, that by frequently revolving these things in their minds, they may endeavor, by moral melioration and political improvement, to lessen the load of human calamity, to in-

crease the sum of innocent pleasures, and the number of those to whom they may be extended.

THE PRINCIPAL MORAL WRITERS
AND SYSTEMS OF MORALITY
CONSIDERED AND
COMPARED.

MORALITY is the science which teaches men their duty to themselves and to each other, and, without depreciating the value of the rest, it may be justly affirmed, that none is more excellent than morality, for as the knowledge of our true interest is the surest means of happiness, that wisdom must be far above all other, which teaches us to enjoy the blessings of life, and to mitigate its calamities. The most complete acquaintance with the operations of nature is not to be compared with a knowledge of the human mind and the great duties of morality, tho' the former is by no means to be neglected in the search after happiness, for as the comforts of life contribute in no small degree to its enjoyment, the pursuits of natural and experimental philosophy which have increased and extended these comforts, are to be taken into the estimate of useful

acquirements. It is of the first importance that we faithfully discharge the relative duties of parent, child, and citizen, and so far as a knowledge of the uses and properties of nature, by qualifying us for any useful employment, contributes to this purpose, so far it deserves our attention and regard. These remarks are premised to teach us how to appreciate the value of different sciences, and to place in its proper light, the merit of that which it is here proposed to consider. Without duly understanding the nature of what we intend either to study or perform, we are in danger of being perpetually misled by an appearance of utility, and of giving an unjust preference to things of comparatively small importance; it is from hence only that we see so many men engaged in trifling and vicious pursuits, or wasting their time in fruitless researches, and that the great end of our nature, and the principal means of our happiness, are so frequently misconceived.

Morality being the study which, for its practical uses, most deserves our attention, it will not, I trust, be deemed a useless or unprofitable employment, either to myself or others, if I attempt to estimate the relative merits of the principal moralists, and systems of mo-

rality, by comparing them together, with a view to enable those who have leisure and talents to judge for themselves, to adopt the best motives and the best rules for their conduct in society. The most eminent moral writers may be divided into three sorts, viz.—those who have given their advice in precepts, apolagues, and treatises,—those who have enquired into the foundations of morality and the nature of man,—and those who have united these different methods together. The sources of morality are not difficult to be discovered, even by those who look for them independent of any divine communication; they are to be found in our mutual wants and dependencies, and the progress of that stream which has its origin in our common nature, may be easily followed thro' all the mazes of society, in its advances from rudeness to refinement. In morals as in criticism, and in every other branch of knowledge, the practice will be found to have gone before the theory, for men feel an impulse to action before they have leisure to reason upon their motives. Homer wrote his Iliad, before Aristotle published his Treatise on Poetry, and moral actions arising from a sense of their utility, must have preceded moral precepts. Men forming by degrees just

notions of virtue, delivered their advice to others, in the humble form of precepts and apologetics, for in the infant state of society, where the wants, possessions, and relations of men, are few, their laws and their morality must be plain and simple. As the former multiply, the latter also increase, and in process of time, men of leisure and talents forsaking the sententious brevity of maxims, and the concealed wisdom of fables, have at different times, by a severer application of their faculties, endeavored to strengthen the obligations of morality by an appeal to the reason of their fellow-creatures, and by accurate observations on the conduct of man, to point out to him his nature, his duty, and his interest. Others again, without any mixture of metaphysical disquisition, have detailed the practical duties of life, in essays and treatises of various lengths, or blended the three together. Whatever degree of credit these different writers may have obtained from individuals or the public, and whatever effect they may have had in teaching men to regulate their conduct, it is certainly in some measure a reproach to human reason, that no system has ever been adopted by a whole people, or acquired much celebrity in the world, without the aid of

mystery and miracles, so much do men require to be allured by something supernatural, which they do not comprehend. To the first division of these writers I have no hesitation in saying we are the most indebted; for they who set before us, from the result of their experience, plain and simple precepts, or employ the imagination as an instrument of instruction in the formation of concise parables or fables, or even they who expatiate on the relative duties of life, in practical treatises, certainly contribute more to the happiness of society than they who indulge themselves in metaphysical speculations, in which the vanity of supporting a system is often more concerned, than the desire of doing good. There is no doubt, that the great variety of theories which have been invented on the origin of our duty, have rather tended to mislead and bewilder the minds of men, than to furnish them with forcible motives to the practice of virtue, for most of these theories have been rather the produce of a subtle invention, than the result of actual experience; their authors have first supposed men to act from certain motives, and then endeavored, with the unnatural violence of Procrustes, to accommodate the origin of all human actions to their own standard.

Another evil attendant on these speculations is, that they generally withdraw both their authors and their readers from the active performance of their duty, and substitute a kind of spurious wisdom for vital and practical morality, so that it frequently happens, that those who are most conversant about enquiries into the nature of man, and his moral relations, are found to be the least useful, and sometimes the most defective in all the offices of society. There is another disadvantage almost inseparable from these enquiries, which is their uncertainty, for some men seeing the various, and even opposite theories which different philosophers have invented to account for the operations of the human mind, and the motives of human conduct, consider it as a hopeless undertaking to extend such researches any further. Yet these enquiries, when prosecuted with moderation, and a due regard to experience, are not entirely without their use, and cannot fail of affording curious information to men of contemplative minds. Nevertheless, those philosophers will be most sought after and admired, who, blending speculation with practical advice, neither seem to withdraw men entirely from active duties and pleasing accomplishments, nor to forbid that spirit of enquiry into

the nature of our faculties and motives, which forms a considerable portion of the pleasure which an inquisitive and rational mind is capable of receiving. Whether all men will become practically better for such studies may be disputed, but that they ought, admits not of a doubt, for surely the custom of reflecting deeply on the frailty of our nature, on the limited operation of our faculties, and our state of mutual dependence, should teach us to act from motives of kindness and benevolence, superior to the gross considerations of low self-interest, or distant reward.

The most eminent of those who have given precepts for the conduct of mankind, among the ancients, are Confucius, Moses, Solomon, the author of Ecclesiasticus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Seneca, Jesus Christ, and his disciples. Among the moderns, **Rochefoucault**, the **Œconomy of Human Life**, and **Dr Franklin**. Numerous are the writers of fables and apologetics, both in ancient and modern times, but **Æsop** is the best of the ancient fabulists, and **Gay** of the modern. The best treatises of morality are those of **Epictetus**, **Plutarch**, **Antoninus**, **Montaigne**, **Bacon**, **Charron**, **La Bruyere**, **Addison**, **Johnson**, and **Knox**. The ancients united speculation with practical morality more

than the moderns, and there is hardly any ancient philosopher who, after delivering those opinions on the nature of the supreme good, and the soul of man, which formed the distinction of his sect, did not endeavor to prove the excellence of his principles, by the precepts which he laid down as their consequence. Modern philosophers, on the contrary, are chiefly speculative moralists, for in the writings of Hobbes, Shaftesbury, Locke, Hume, Helvetius, and Stewart, there is not to be found one word of practical advice; others, however, have united metaphysical enquiry with moral precept, and have taught mankind not only the nature, but the rules of virtue. Paley, St Lambert, and de la Metherie, are therefore more useful writers than the dry metaphysicians abovementioned, and they deserve to be perpetually read and admired for their curious enquires and useful morality.

The Chinese are a people much talked of, and very little known. It has been their policy to keep themselves separate from all other nations, and their language has not a little contributed to this purpose, for very few people have attempted to understand it.— Their antiquity is now acknowledged to be far beyond that of the Mosaic chronology; Con-

fucius wrote above five hundred years before Moses ; I have, therefore, in opposition to the vulgar prejudice, placed him before the Jewish law-giver. To the zeal and industry of a Jesuit we are indebted for an accurate knowledge of this great philosopher. Father Coup-let, in the year 1687, published a complete translation into Latin, of three of his four books, with a learned preface, and a copious commentary ; by him we are informed, that the French Jesuit missionaries in China could make no progress in converting the people without a knowledge of their literature and language ; they therefore applied themselves to these studies, and found that, by the know-ledge of about five or six thousand letters, or words, they were able to translate many of their books, and to convince the Chinese, by that means, of the conformity between Christianity and the precepts of Confucius. The cautious Jesuit, in his researches after the antiquity of the Chinese, treads upon very dangerous ground, tho' he labors hard to prove, that they must have derived all their knowledge of the Deity from one of the sons of Noah. Let this, however, be as it may, there is no doubt that they believed in one Supreme Being, and that they were early in-

structed in a very wise system of policy, and a very pure system of morality. It has been sagely remarked, that a nation can only be well governed when kings are philosophers, or philosophers are kings, and this has happened to no nation more than to the Chinese ; for not only their kings, but all their great ministers of state, were philosophers. Confucius himself had served in very high offices, and it appears that he applied himself very strictly to the study of philosophy, both before he came into power, and after he had quitted a public, for a contemplative life. He kept a school of philosophy, in which he is said to have had above three thousand disciples, five hundred of whom were appointed to high offices in the government. No man was ever held in greater veneration, nor more deservedly ; the chief objects of his philosophy were to dissipate the mists of error, to increase the cultivation of reason, to teach wisdom, justice, and humanity. His first precept is, “ to cultivate and polish that natural reason, which is the gift of heaven, and without which cultivation or knowledge of the true nature of things, we neither can manage ourselves, our families, nor the state,” and this will apply, in different degrees, from the lowest peasant to the king.

upon the throne. His first book is chiefly addressed to kings, and contains much excellent advice on the manner in which they ought to govern themselves, and the people with whose happiness they are entrusted. Page 13, he particularly enforces that self-examination by which a man may be convinced of the purity of his intentions, of that desire of what is right, and that aversion to evil, which are the very elements of morality. Having now spoken of his philosophy in general, I will give the most remarkable parts in terms as concise as possible.

“The great science of princes consists in improving and cultivating their reason; it consists also in renovating and reforming the people by their example and advice; it consists in choosing and firmly persisting in what is good. After any man has acquired this state of mind, it is impossible for him to be disturbed either by prosperity or adversity.” “To make much of little things, and little of great ones, is neither consistent with reason nor prudence.” In the basin of king Tolu it was written, “Wash and renew thyself every day.”—An exhortation to perpetual self examination. “The king can hear and decide causes, but the best thing he can do is to persuade the people, by

mutual love and indulgence, to avoid litigation." "To what purpose is dissimulation. What a man is in himself, that he will in the end appear to other people." "Riches adorn a house, but virtue adorns the man." "An honest heart makes an open countenance." "All immoderate passions are deviations from that rectitude which is the great rule of living." "A man in love cannot see the faults of his beloved; an avaricious man cannot see the fertility of his own fields." "A kingdom is but a large family." "A good king loves his people as a mother loves her new-born child." "As one rash word will spoil the greatest affairs, so the single example of the king regulates and strengthens a whole kingdom." "A good king will exact from others only what he performs himself." "A king who is not good cannot propagate goodness, and he that is wicked to himself cannot be good to others." "To govern a kingdom rightly, he must first govern well his own family." "He only is a wise and good king who knows how to love men and how to hate them." "A wise king, who is a lover of his people, will desire to see them rich rather than himself; but a cruel and wicked one will delight only in his own riches, tho' at his people's expence."—His second book

treats chiefly on the golden law of mediocrity. "A prudent man," says he, "always preserves the medium; but a foolish one goes above or below it; the vulgar seldom preserve it; but this is no new thing; it is an old complaint, and the cause of it is, that some think themselves too wise, and others not wise enough."

"The Chinese Annals relate, that the Emperor Xun used to hang a large tablet in the front of his palace, in which he invited the people to write his faults." "A prudent man will be content with his lot; if he is rich he will not give himself up to luxury and unlawful pleasures, nor offend others by his pride and arrogance; if he is poor he will still be honest." "A prudent man is like a good archer, if he errs from his mark, he will endeavor to find out the reason." "The Emperor Xun acquired celebrity by his virtues, which extended even to his parents; in dignity he was the son of heaven, and his fame descended to his posterity." "Let a man be ever so ignorant, if he wishes and desires to learn, and is not fatigued with the study of virtue, he may arrive at the highest degree of wisdom." "Be careful how you behave yourself in your own house, do nothing there

which you would blush to have known."—
"A prudent man is cautious both in what he says and does, and the fruit of his wisdom is, that in time he brings himself to say or do nothing which he should not wish to have known and heard."

The third book consists chiefly of moral apothegms delivered by Confucius and his disciples. "A man of studied words and smooth countenance is seldom an honest man." "Cultivate peace and good will with all men, but connect yourself closely with men of wisdom and probity." "Sincerity of heart is the first of virtues." "Never make a friend of a worse man than yourself, but of him who is wiser and better." "Perform your promise, if it is not contrary to equity and justice, for justice is before every promise." "Let no man torment himself because his virtue and talents are not known to the world; let him rather be distressed if he knows not the world, and is mistaken in those whom he ought to embrace or to avoid." "Let our whole mind and thoughts be free from depravity; let us never intend, much less commit evil." "Never speak what you do not know for certain, and never undertake what you have not well considered." "Shew yourself at all times towards others, the same that

you would wish them to be towards you."—
 "When I first set out in life I gave credit
 to men for their words, I will now only believe
 them when their words and their actions cor-
 respond." "Tho' we ought to hate the wick-
 ed for their crimes, yet if they repent sincere-
 ly, we should embrace them as if they had
 never sinned." "I blush for and abhor the
 smoothness of flatterers, for nothing is so in-
 dispensable in the commerce of men, as sincer-
 ity." "There is nothing that I so ardently
 wish as that the old should be respected, that
 equals should have confidence in each other,
 and that those who are weak from age, from
 infirmity, or poverty, should be cherished and
 supported." "The good of the whole human
 race is my wish." "Simplicity of manners
 should be accompanied by simplicity of dress
 and ornament." "The sanctity, the charity,
 the piety, which I require, is an even and
 regular disposition of mind, consistent with
 reason, which rejecting every narrow and sel-
 fish consideration, embraces the whole world,
 and when this becomes universal, all men
 will be but like one family, and the whole
 globe connected by one band of harmony."
 "Let us love others no less than ourselves,
 let us measure them by ourselves and estimate

their labors and pleasures by our own."—
"I was not born with wisdom, but from my earliest years was studious of antiquity, and giving much time and diligence to study, I obtained the knowledge with which I am endowed." "If I walk with two men at the same time, I will derive instruction from both; for example, if the one is a bad, and the other a good man, I will imitate the virtues of the one, and correct my own vices by the vices of the other." "Two things are requisite in the government of a state,—to do nothing rashly, and not to attend too minutely to trifles; for by the first you will do many things without consideration, and by the last you will often neglect things of great moment." "A prudent man will agree with all men, so far as is consistent with reason, but not so as to court the multitude; a foolish man will identify himself with the people, without choice or selection, so that he will neither be consistent with reason nor justice." "The ancients studied wisdom on their own account for the fruits they derived from it; the moderns for interest or vain applause." "I detest a man who is pertinacious and obstinate in his opinion, and yet on the first threat or attack of public commotion, shrinks from his sen-

timents, and no longer speaks of reforming the morals of the people, or redressing their grievances." Page 105. "Some one may ask, Ought we to return injury with kindness? I answer, as far as justice requires, let injuries be punished, but let benefits always be requited." "Is there one word by which a man may direct his whole life? Do to others what you wish them to do to you." "Do the multitude hate a man, let him be examined. Do they love him, let him be examined." "Three things are to be avoided by him who is a follower of virtue; in youth, lust; in middle life, ambition; and in old age, avarice." "Men are by nature united, by different manners and pursuits they are separated." "Men who are determined to rise in the world will stop at nothing mean, base, and contemptible, which can further their purpose." "The tongue is the index of the heart, and what the latter thinks cannot always be concealed, &c."

To form a just estimate of the merits of Confucius as a moralist, we must consider the time and country in which he lived, for tho' we do not find in him much that can be called new, we are to remember, that it was new when it was written, and so new that nothing of the same kind had gone before it. He was

perhaps the earliest teacher of morality from whom we have any written precepts, and when it is understood how little has been added to them by modern improvement, we are either to consider him as a man of the most profound meditation, or that the great duties of morality, are in all civilized countries nearly the same. Tho' China has always been, and is yet, in a manner separated from all other countries by her language and her policy, yet we find there, the same relations of life, the same ranks, and the same employments as in other nations ; the maxims of morality are therefore nearly the same, and it is not to be wondered if there is so little difference between the precepts of Confucius and those of later moralists. They arrest the attention and the memory by their conciseness, and by their sublime purity engage the understanding and the heart, and what is more remarkable, the disciples of Confucius are yet numerous, after the lapse of four thousand years since he lived.

The Bible is one of the oldest books in which a system of morality is united with a system of theology. Having no prejudice in favor of the latter, which represents the Deity as jealous, vindictive, and cruel, I will proceed to examine its moral precepts, freely and im-

partially, and endeavor to decide how far they are calculated to promote the purpose for which they were intended. The notions which Moses entertained of one supreme, indivisible Being, seem to have been acquired in Egypt where God was worshipped under the name of *o*, or, *o w*, a term originally applied to the Sun. V. Diod. Sic. vol. I. Whether the Egyptians had begun to spiritualize their worship before the time of Moses or not, is doubtful; it is certain, however, that Moses, tho' he ceased to worship the Sun and other heavenly bodies, had not conceived the idea of a Being wholly spiritual, for he continually represents the Deity as having a bodily form, and even ascribes to him human passions and frailties.—The God of Moses is a jealous God, a God of anger, of vengeance, and resentment, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. v. *Exod.* c. xx. v. 5.

The account which the Bible gives of the origin of natural and moral evil, in the history of Adam and Eve, is supposed by many to be allegorical, and such a supposition is wisely entertained by those who wish to form exalted notions of the Deity. Murder is the first crime forbidden by God himself, an injunction con-

sistent with the earliest notions of men concerning their duty to each other, and founded on that obvious utility which tends to the preservation of society. "And surely the blood of your life will I require," *Gen.* ix. 5. Whether the punishment annexed to the crime of murder is equally salutary, moralists have not decided, and legislators have not enquired. "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," ver. 6. It breathes, however, a spirit of sanguinary vengeance, remote from the mildness of christianity, or the sober dictates of philosophy. That human sacrifices were practised in the early ages of the world is evident from the command of God to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. The conduct of the patriarchs in the various relations of life, exhibits no very correct notions of morality; and if their practice is supposed to convey instruction to future ages, the crimes of fornication, adultery, incest, deceit, and malice, may be justified by an appeal to their example, all of which seemed to have been atoned for and overlooked in consideration of their sacrifices, their prayers, and their piety; but as Moses has condemned many of these crimes in his laws, we will suppose that he held up his

ancestors not “as patterns to imitate, but as examples to deter.” JUNIUS.

Noah, after having planted the vine, was the first to abuse the fruits of it, for he got drunk, and exposed himself to the ridicule of his family. To shew, however, that he had a sense of his criminality, he vented the heaviest imprecations of vengeance and malice against the son who had been the witness of his shame, vide *Gen.* ix. 21, 25. The adultery of Abraham was sanctioned by his wife, *Gen.* xii. v. 13. tho’ adultery at that time was considered as a crime; for Abimelech reproved Abraham severely for having put him in danger of committing that crime by calling his wife his sister, *Gen.* xx. v. 9. The daughters of Lot were with child by their father; for after they had tempted him to drink wine, they then tempted him to commit incest, *Gen.* xix. 31. Abraham was not satisfied with Hagar alone, but had many other concubines, *Gen.* xxv. 6. Jacob, instructed by his mother Rebecca, defrauded his brother Esau of his father’s blessing, *Gen.* xxvii. The treachery of Laban to Jacob is fully recorded in the xxixth of Gen. and the craft of Jacob towards Laban in return, may be found in the xxxth.

We are now to examine the moral laws and

precepts of Moses, who laid claim to the sanction of divine authority for all that he taught and commanded. Of the ten commandments, which are the foundation of Jewish morality, six only are strictly moral, the four first are purely religious, five of them are founded on a basis which even time itself can never destroy, and four of them are capable of being enforced by punishments which, to a certain degree, will secure their performance, the sixth is addressed only to the *minds* of men, and as our thoughts are neither the subject of cognizance nor punishment, it is a benevolent, tho' too frequently an unavailing precept. The laws of morality do not in all cases require nor admit of aid from the laws of the land. The relative duties of life, such as are comprehended under the precept of "Honor thy father and thy mother," cannot be enforced by law; it is only the grosser violations of justice and humanity for which the legislator can enact punishment; he may declare his sentiments, but he cannot compel obedience. In forbidding to kill, to steal, or bear false witness, he is armed with the power of enforcing his commands: where punishment alone is required, he can punish, but he cannot reward, that must be left to the feelings of each man's con-

science and the approbation of the world. The system of Moses, however, is a system of penal law as well as of morality, and tho' it aims at enforcing moral duties, its chief power consists in enacting punishment for those crimes which are strictly definable by legislative authority. In some instances, however, he has departed from the gentleness of injunction, and sanctioned parental authority with the severest punishment: "Whosoever striketh his father or mother, whosoever curseth his father or mother, shall surely die," *Exod.* xxi. 15. In many points, the laws of Moses are superior in wisdom, humanity, and justice to those of any other ancient legislator, and where they fall short, or countenance erroneous principles, these defects are to be attributed to the ignorance of the times, rather than to the fault of the legislator. If the Jews were cruel, it was only to the other nations, whom it was their policy to subdue and keep at a distance, but to each other the precepts of Moses recommend gentleness, humanity, and forbearance. To succor the oppressed, to defend the fatherless and the widow, to receive the stranger, to be kind, to be merciful, to be pitiful, gentle, and humane, are precepts of the Mosaical law, tho' some men suppose them

to have been first delivered by Christ. The laws of Moses, on the whole, so far as they relate to morality, must have had a considerable effect in civilizing the rude nature of man, and giving him just ideas of those relative duties, without which there is no comfort in life, nor any enjoyment in society. The law concerning the destruction of witches, tho' a mark of barbarism, has disgraced the code of more civilized nations than the Jews, (see Statutes, 1 Jac. 12.) and even this foolish severity is fully atoned for by the laws contained in Leviticus and elsewhere, " And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest." And, " Thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard ; thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger," *Lev.* xix. 9. 10. The same kind advice is given again, *Deut.* xxiv. 19. " Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind," *Lev.* xix. 14. " Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty ; but in righteousness shalt thou judge," verse 15. " Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of

thy people ; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," verse 18. " If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him, yea, tho' he be a stranger or a sojourner," *Lev.* xxv. 35. In all that regards the treatment of slaves, the same mild precepts are inculcated. The greatest consideration for the poor is every where enforced. " If a man be poor thou shalt not sleep with his pledge, in any case thou shalt deliver him his pledge when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment and bless thee," *Deut.* xxiv. 12, 13. " Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger and the fatherless, nor take the widow's garment to pledge," verse 17. Even dumb animals are not forgotten by the humanity of Moses, for he says, " Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," xxv. 4. The last of the benevolent precepts of Moses which I mean to cite, is one which regardeth the poor : " If there be among you a poor man, and one of your brethren, within any of the gates, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thy hand against him ; but thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, and shalt lend him sufficient in his need in that which he wanteth," *Deut.* xv. 7, 8.

The instances of cruelty which are related in the Old Testament, even during the life of Moses, have furnished serious objections to many men against its divine authority, and if they are inconsistent with the general mildness of his laws, they are certainly much more so with our ideas of supreme benevolence; for Moses there may be some excuse; he had to civilize a fierce and barbarous people, and he was obliged, in many instances, to yield to their perverse and cruel disposition; he had to contend also with savage and idolatrous enemies, and tho' he mistook the disposition of the true God, he thought he was promoting his service and exalting his honor, by putting his enemies to the sword; he is not the only example of men who are cruel to their enemies, but mild and gentle to their friends. The many examples of wickedness, cruelty, and treachery which are to be found in the Bible after Moses's death, are no more a reproach to his laws (which forbid all such transgressions), than the same crimes committed under christianity are an argument against its mild and moral tendency; for the power of law and conscience is weak against the force of the passions and the strong temptations which the world continually presents to vice and depravity.

The laws and morality of Moses have hardly ever been impartially examined, for the blind zeal of religion forbids all examination, and the equally blind malice of infidelity denies all merit to that which is deemed sacred. Like every invention of man, the system of Moses contains many things to be admired, and many to be condemned; it is a compound of wisdom and folly—the former derived from the talents of the man, the latter from the ignorance of the age in which he lived, and if it can be divested of the idea of inspiration, a word which conveys no distinct meaning, it may be read and studied by all nations with singular utility, and it would be well if the benevolent precepts it contains were adopted in the laws or practised by the people of all civilized countries. Forming a part of our religion, the Old Testament must be taken altogether, it is therefore wholly neglected, and the best parts of it are lost, because they are connected with a load of trash which can neither be practised nor admired.

The Proverbs of Solomon, like all the aphorisms of ancient wisdom, are short and concise, and therefore adapted to an early state of the world, when printing had not come in aid of memory, and the chief knowledge of mankind,

was traditional; they contain excellent advice to men of all ranks and stations, and are a proof that their authors were well acquainted with the world. I use the word authors because Solomon was not the author of them all, for he, like Confucius and other editors of wise sayings, collected together the aphorisms of many who had gone before him, some having the names of their authors, others not, to these he added a few of his own. Even now, in our present improved state of society, there are many good sayings and expressions floating in common conversation, which, from their wisdom and conciseness, have acquired proverbial celebrity. Solomon, and Jesus the son of Sirach, did no more than collect such as these together into one volume, and publish them under their own names, which has been the means of their preservation to a remote posterity. To the Proverbs of Solomon, little can be added of moral wisdom, and he that reads them without being improved, must either be incapable of improvement, or require none. They contain admirable lessons of prudence for young people, and were they divested of their religious dress, might be more generally read by those who are disgusted with any thing that wears the appear-

ance of cant, and affected sanctity, for they are mere maxims of worldly prudence, as they promise only worldly advantages, and teach us rightly to enjoy the good things of this life. Riches and honors they tell us, are not to be enjoyed without them, and by them may riches and honors be acquired, chap. viii. 18; they inculcate prudence, justice, and temperance, sincerity, peacefulness, moderation, chastity, compassion, and humility, chap. xi. 31, but say not a word of fortitude. In chap. xi. v. 15, perhaps the virtue of prudence is stretched too far: "He that hateth suretyship is sure." We ought certainly not to pledge ourselves for every man, but to those in whom we have confidence, it is a duty we owe to each other. Notwithstanding the excellence of these precepts, it is to be remarked, that they contain many tedious repetitions, as may be seen by the references at the side of our common bibles; yet, on the whole, it will be found, that few more excellent collections of moral advice exist. They contain more knowledge of mankind than usually falls to the lot of kings; but if they were more read and practised by kings, it would be better both for them and the world. Such is the admirable brevity of the Proverbs, that they have fur-

nished matter of reflection to divines and moralists, which has been wire-drawn through many ponderous volumes, and a single verse of Solomon, by the modern talent for amplification, has been spun out into as many sermons as there are verses in the book.

The wisdom of the son of Sirach is little inferior to that of the pretended Solomon; it is of a much later date, and therefore reprobates many breaches of moral duty which were unknown to the former, and contains allusions to many customs and practices which were not in being at the time when the other compilation was formed; yet there are many points in which they are alike, and many precepts which are to be found in both. The virtue of fortitude which is never mentioned in the Proverbs, is repeatedly enforced in the Ecclesiasticus: "Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of trouble," chap. ii. 2. "Whatsoever is brought upon thee, take cheerfully, and be patient when thou art changed to a low estate," verse 4. "When the dead is at rest, let his remembrance rest: and be comforted when his spirit is departed from him," chap. xxxviii. 23. "A patient man will bear for a time, and afterward joy shall spring up unto him," chap. i. 23. "Dis-

trust not the Lord when thou art poor,"
verse 28.

The book of Ecclesiasticus displays a wider extent of knowledge, and a greater acquaintance with life than that of the Proverbs, so that it must have been written in a more advanced state of society, for there is hardly any station in life, of which the duties do not seem to have been understood. Mercy and compassion to the poor are the most frequently repeated, as indeed in all those writings which are called sacred; much of it is borrowed from the Psalms, and from many other books; the professed author, indeed, tells us, that most of it was compiled. The constant attention to the poor which is enforced so strongly in the law of Moses, in Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus, bespeaks the amiable spirit of their authors, and can never be too often repeated in modern times, when the poor are too much despised.—To select the maxims of prudence which are to be found in every chapter of this excellent book, is almost impossible; I have many times attempted it, but finding it was likely to take up too much room, I leave it to my readers to make their own choice, as the book, if not in every one's hands, is at least within their reach.

The morality of Confucius, like that of Cicero and many other philosophers, stands by itself, independent and unsupported by any other aid than its own internal excellence. The morality of the Old Testament claims a divine origin, but pretends to no future nor distant reward; connected with a religious establishment, its existence has endured through numberless ages, but its efficacy has perhaps never been so great as that of the Chinese philosopher, for both Jews and Christians have disgraced their teachers, while the disciples of the Pagan instructor, tho' not numerous, have been genuine and stedfast. The Bible, without the advantage of being read in its original language, is so far naturalized in ours as to be received with equal authority, and the defects of the translation are supplied by the zeal of the faithful, for what cannot be comprehended may be received, and even admired by the pious believer. To say the truth, there is a charm in its ancient simplicity which it is impossible to equal in any modern composition, and which clothes it with a degree of sanctity, even in the opinions of those who are most unwilling to allow its divine authenticity.

The greatest part of the philosophers whose lives have been written by Diogenes Laertius,

left upon record some precepts of moralit which ought never to be forgotten; their physical or metaphysical doctrines I have no desire to remember, for they all equally wander in uncertainty. Socrates was the first who attempted wholly to divert the minds of men from such pursuits, but there were many before his time who have left us memorable and sententious precepts of morality; these are contained in answers to moral and prudential questions.

THALES

Being asked by one who had committed adultery, whether he should not swear that he had not committed it, replied "No, for perjury is a greater crime than adultery." "The most difficult thing," he said, "is to know yourself, the easiest to give advice, and the most pleasant to obtain what you wish." It was asked of him how we must live justly and honestly, he replied, "By not doing those things we find fault with in others." "Who is truly happy," said some one, "He who is healthy in body, easy in fortune, and well educated." "Never forget your friends," was another of his maxims, and his biographer asserts, that he was the author of that golden aphorism, "Know thyself," which has been ascribed to Chilo.

Being asked which was the worst of all wild beasts, he answered, "A tyrant," which of all tame ones, he said, "A flatterer."

SOLON.

The following are amongst the precepts of this wise lawgiver. "Consider integrity as stronger than oaths." "Lie not." "Study good things." "Contract no sudden friendships." "Follow reason." "Avoid the wicked." "Honor your parents."

CHILO.

"Govern your tongue." "Honor old age." "Be on your guard against yourself." "An honorable loss is better than dishonorable gain." "Insult not the wretched." "Govern well your own household." "Restrain your anger." "Obey the laws." "Gold tries the minds of men."

PITTACUS.

"Wise men foresee evils, and brave men know how to bear them." "Never divulge your wishes or designs, for if you cannot accomplish them, you will be laughed at." "Restore a deposit." "Speak not evil of a friend, nor even of an enemy." "Love sobriety, truth, honor, friendship, and diligence."

BIAS.

He said every man was unfortunate who

could not bear misfortune. "It is a disease of the mind to aim at impossibilities." Being asked what was the pleasantest thing in life, he replied, "Hope." "Deliberate long before you determine, but persist when you have once begun." "The majority of mankind are bad."

CLEOBULUS.

"Ignorance and loquacity are the most common things in the world." "Shew kindness to your friends to make them more friendly, and to your enemies to make them friends." "Be more studious to hear than to speak." "Be moderate in your pleasures." "Be not insolent in prosperity." "Neither caress nor scold your wife before company, for the first is a mark of folly, the last of rudeness."

PERIANDER.

"Quiet is good, temerity is dangerous, gain is base." "Pleasures are mortal, honors are immortal." "In prosperity be moderate, in adversity prudent." "Be the same to your friends whether they are fortunate or unfortunate." "Perform your promise." "Keep secrets."

ANARCHARSIS

Being reproached by an Athenian with being a Scythian, he replied, "My country may be a reproach to me, but you are a reproach to

your country." Being asked what was both good and bad, he replied, "The tongue." He said, "It was better to have one good friend than many worthless."

ARCESILAUS.

"It is the peculiar excellence of philosophy, to know the proper time for every thing."

BION.

"Prudence as much excels all the other virtues, as the sight does the other senses."
"The goods of friends are common."

ANTISTHENES.

"Virtue is the effect of instruction." "Virtue consists in deeds, not in words." "All good men are friends." "A just man is more worthy of our regard than a relation." "Wisdom is a wall which can neither be broken down nor surrendered." "Our own minds should be a tower of impregnable strength."

METROCLES.

"Some things are to be bought with money, and some with time and diligence." "Riches are an evil if not well employed."

The moral maxims of Pythagoras are all that I proposed to consider, but a few words may be said, without much deviation, concerning his metaphysical opinions and philosophical institutions. All writers agree, that

after having been initiated in the mysteries of the Greeks and barbarians, he took a voyage to Egypt, that fruitful mother of wisdom and of folly, and there also was admitted into the number of the elect, by an initiation into the greater, and the lesser mysteries. From all that can be gathered concerning these ceremonies, there is little doubt that they contained the doctrines of the priests on the immortality of the soul, a belief which, arising from no sufficient evidence, has been the source of many and various follies. To relate all the contradictory and ridiculous opinions of the Grecian philosophers on this subject, would fill many volumes, all ending in doubt and uncertainty. Few opinions are more ridiculous than that of Pythagoras concerning the metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls; it may furnish matter for wit, but gives little satisfaction to sober philosophy. Let us then number this among the follies to which every great man is liable, and consider more attentively his positive and moral precepts; the former, like most of the same nature derived from the East, chiefly regarded the health of the body, tho' to us who dwell in a different climate, they seem to have had no meaning whatever. The eastern lawgivers in general

considered the health of their subjects as the means of their happiness, and cleanliness as the means of their health ; it is for this reason that so many kinds of food are forbidden, and so much ablution is enjoined. The Egyptians studied health more than any other people, hence Homer says, “ That every Egyptian is skilled in physic above all other men, for they are of the race of Pæon,” vide *Odyssey* 230. Herodotus also tells us in his *Euterpe*, that the Egyptians had a physician for every part of the body, the head, the eye, the leg, &c.

The sect of Pythagoras, like most other sects, has been grossly calumniated, and many things attributed to them which they never practised. He is said to have forbidden the use of meat and wine, whereas he only forbid its excess, and tho’ he enjoined frequent fasts, yet they were not so rigorous as many have affirmed. All these things were intended for the prevention of disease, and to ensure that tranquillity of mind which is requisite for a life of contemplation and study.—By these preventions the Egyptian priests prolonged their lives to a considerable extent, and Pythagoras did the same by following their example.

The institutions of Pythagoras were intended, by their singularity, to attract the attention of the multitude, and to lead them to the practice of virtue;—they were the means, not the ends of his philosophy, and perhaps never any civil or prudential regulations were so suddenly adopted and so suddenly abandoned; for having experienced severe persecution, even in his lifetime, the people whom he converted to his opinions soon forsook them, and there remained but a few of his chosen disciples, with whom his name was held in veneration; but his principles of morality and legislation were much longer preserved, and were put in practice in various states many years after his decease. Diogenes Laertius contradicts the idea of his having never written any thing, for he says he wrote three books, one on education, another on politics, and another on physics. The doctrines of Pythagoras were of two kinds, the exoteric, or that communicated to the candidates for admission into the interior society, and the esoteric, or that which was revealed to the initiated. They embraced not only morality, but physics, medicine, theology, and astronomy; with the first I am only concerned, and I will endeavor to select the most remarkable. Sto-

bœus has given the most complete collection of his moral doctrines, and they are alone sufficient to entitle him to the reputation he has hitherto enjoyed. Tho' Socrates is said to be the first who taught practical philosophy, yet he in fact only revived it, or was the first who taught it exclusively; for Pythagoras deserves the praise of being the first who taught it in Greece. To him we are indebted for the word philosophy, he first took the name of philosopher, or lover of wisdom, in opposition to the vanity of some who called themselves $\sigma\omega\phi\omega\iota$, or wise. Philosophy he considered as the highest excellence of human life, and the discourse of that philosopher he pronounced vain, by which some passion was not cured. "The most important of all things," he said, "is to inform the mind concerning good and evil." He called virtue, harmony; and friendship, harmonious equality. "Choose that life which is best, and custom will make it pleasant," was another of his maxims, and if taken in its full sense, is perhaps the most extensively useful of any he ever delivered; for it shews that men may be any thing they please, which is within the power of human nature to accomplish, and may like any thing they please, if

they will but give their minds to it. Things the most unpleasant may become the reverse, by long habit, and a determination to like them; antipathies of every kind may be conquered by time and perseverance. Were men fully impressed with this maxim, no kind of vicious or unwholesome pleasure could ever be predominant, for by long custom, even the most simple fare and the most insipid meats acquire a relish equal to the most highly seasoned luxury. Let men but exert this power over the passions, and its effect in producing content and happiness is hardly to be conceived. "We ought either to be silent, or to speak such things as are better than silence." "Do those things which you think right, tho' you think that after you have done them, you shall be disesteemed, for the vulgar is an ill judge of good things, and as you despise their praise, so despise their censure." "Temperance is the strength of the soul to preserve it from passions." "No man is free who doth not command himself." "To possess continence is the greatest wealth."—"Drunkenness is the canker of the flower of the mind." The sacrifices of fools are the food of fire, and their gifts the subsistence of sacrilegious persons," "A horse is not to be guided

without a bridle, nor riches without wisdom." "Esteem it a good part of education to be able to bear the want of education in others." "All men acknowledge wisdom to be the greatest good, yet few endeavor to obtain it." "Friendship makes one man of two." "Various and manifold are the uses of opportunity." These are the most remarkable of his maxims, and they are proofs of his profound meditation on mankind. Whether it was imposture or credulity cannot now be determined, but it is certain that he laid claim to a divine revelation, for he used a symbolical method of teaching, which he said was derived to him from Apollo. In the early ages of the world, even the best moral precepts were unable to obtain a reception among mankind, without the belief of a divine origin, so that we find few legislators who have not availed themselves of this powerful support.

The symbols of Pythagoras are curious, and have been variously interpreted; they are thirty nine in number, and are chiefly illustrative of virtue and piety. "Decline high ways," is an exhortation to avoid the opinion of the multitude, and to follow that of the virtuous few. "Cut not fire with a sword:" the most reasonable interpretation, is exasperate not an angry man, but give way to him. "Pass not

"over a balance" means, violate not the principles of justice. "Sit not upon a bushel," that is, live not idly, but provide things requisite for living. "Breed nothing that has crooked talons,"—means to be free and communicative, and avoid rapacity. "Entertain not a swallow under your roof," take not an ungrateful and inconstant person for your friend. "Give not your right hand readily to every one," that is, contract no sudden friendships. "Eat not the heart," means, consume not yourself with care. "Beware of beans;" whether this precept was to be taken literally or symbolically, the learned have not determined. To these symbols others may be added, collected by Iamblichus, of which the principal are these:—"Take not up what falls from the table," which must mean, live not upon other men, tho' it has been otherwise interpreted. "Break not bread," divide not friends. "Set down salt," remember justice, which preserveth all things. "Pluck not a crown," offend not the laws established. "Hurt not a mild plant," harm not the harmless. "Sail not on the ground," raise not such taxes as are burdensome to industry.—Here ends the moral wisdom of Pythagoras, which justly entitles him to a higher name than that of philosopher.

The moral precepts of Pythagoras we have seen are not numerous, so that the tendency of his philosophy is to be gathered as much from his institutions as from his words: purity and simplicity of manners were the great objects of his advice, and if his regulations had been as well adapted to a whole country, as to a small society, peace and happiness might have been spread over the earth, but large bodies of men cannot long be preserved from vice, and vice will ever be the disturber of happiness; such is the constitution of the world.

The institutions of Pythagoras contained too much mystery, and too many rigorous observances for the generality of mankind, and therefore could only be supported for a while, by the spirit of a sect. His disciples lived together in a large house at Crotona, and were divided into different classes, some of whom were occupied in divine contemplation, and others in studying the stars, while the rest were employed in the management of the house, to prepare them for the concerns of the world. It was not easy for any one to commence his novitiate without undergoing a strict examination into his life, habits, and conduct, and upon admission, he was to deliver up all his

possessions to the common fund; for three years he was hardly noticed, and the term of his probation frequently lasted six or seven, without he shewed particular signs of merit. When this period was over, he was condemned to five years of silence, and after that he was examined for his admission into the mysteries of the sect, and indulged with a sight of the great teacher; if he was not equal to pass this examination, he was condemned to a living tomb, in the interior of the house, and deprived of all communication with the society; the same punishment was inflicted on those who divulged the sacred doctrines to the profane. A certain number were permitted to return into the world, and resume their different employments; while they continued in the college, they rose early every morning, and underwent two examinations,—the first, as to what they had said or done the evening before; the next, what they intended to do during the day. They then put on a clean white robe, the emblem of purity, and having chanted hymns to the lyre, prostrated themselves before the rising sun; after which they commenced their different studies and amusements, which consisted of walking in their beautiful gardens, conversing upon sub-

jects of natural and moral philosophy, and attending the lectures of professors in the different sciences ; Pythagoras himself frequently mixing among them, and asking them questions. Then commenced the exercises of wrestling, and running, and after that they sat down to a frugal repast ; they then returned to their garden, where they conversed in parties of two or three together on the subjects which they had been studying, but under a strict injunction never to mingle ridicule, irony, nor calumny, with their discourse. The two leading principles of their lives were an intimate union with the gods, by meditation and prayer, and the same with men, thro' affection and benevolence. By such a life, the turbulent and boisterous passions which disturb men in the commerce of the world were completely banished, and the disciples of that favoured sect seemed " to antedate the bliss of heaven," to which it was their ambition continually to aspire. Their great objects were all in common ; they therefore had competition without rivalry, and sacrificed every thing to the love of harmony ; they had neither enmity, malice, nor distrust ; they had no occasion to deceive, nor to envy each other ; whenever the slightest expression of warmth had appeared in their

conversation, they never slept without shaking hands, as a token that no spark of enmity remained. Pythagoras, who lived among them with the affection of a father, but with the authority of a monarch, sought only to calm their differences, and inform their minds; by this constant attention and regard, he acquired such an influence among them, that his lightest words were considered as oracles, and all objections were silenced by these commanding words, “He said it.”* Like the free-masons of modern times, the disciples of Pythagoras were known to each other, in every part of the world, by certain signals, without any previous acquaintance, and whenever they knew of a brother in distress, they were bound to relieve him to their utmost ability—Pythagoras himself went from Italy to Delos to succor his old preceptor Pherecydes, and staid with him till his decease.—Vide Diod. Sic. vol. 9. They expressed neither impatience nor complaints under misfortune, neither meanness, nor weakness in danger; they never descended to intreaties, because in all cases they required only

* *Αὐτὸς εἶφη*, or *ipse dixit*, is almost anglicised to express a peremptory affirmation.

justice; nor to flattery, because they admired truth above all things; their object was to propagate their doctrines throughout the world, from a conviction of their beneficent tendency. By refusing to admit the great and the profligate into their society, they excited the flames of persecution, and for the reasons before-mentioned, they were calumniated, and banished from Crotona, and at length finally dispersed, but a society whose principles had formed such characters as Epaminondas and Phocion deserved a better lot.

The merits of the system of Pythagoras, compared with those which I have already spoken of, it is by no means difficult to estimate; the moral tendency of his institution no man will venture to doubt, but it was better suited to a sect, than to the world, and if the practical and general utility of every human invention is to decide its merits, the moral maxims of Confucius, and the Old Testament, will weigh against those of Pythagoras as gold to a feather; they teach pure morality without mystery or mummery, and bring their readers at once to the knowledge of their duty; he requires years of previous discipline, and then a rigorous initiation, they speak to the heart and judgment at once, he wearis both, to a point almost too great for

human patience, and then perhaps for a slight defect of knowledge, rejects the candidate to another seven years of idle penance and ignominious silence. All this may do very well for men of a strong temper of mind, but it is not calculated for the multitude, and therefore could never do any extensive good ; it shews indeed the height of excellence at which some men may arrive by patient thinking, and continued discipline, but it is a dangerous experiment which few are capable of enduring, and fewer are willing to hazard ; the world is not to be reformed by such austeries, nor can even a single sect long maintain itself, which practises such rigid penance, and had they even not suffered persecution, it is hardly possible they could have been kept together for any length of time after their leader's death. The name of Pythagoras has been, and will be long remembered, not so much for what he accomplished, as for what he intended.

The morality taught by Socrates is perhaps the best calculated for practical utility, of any which the ancient philosophers have left us ; before his time, men had wasted their lives in idle speculations on the motions of the heavenly bodies, on the formation of the world,

and the nature of the soul; he first taught them to apply themselves wholly to the moral duties and practical conveniences of life.— His instruction was not delivered exactly like those of whom I have hitherto spoken, in short maxims or aphorisms, for none of these are left upon record; but his method of teaching was by conversation and argument, in a kind of subtle interrogation, by which he led men imperceptibly to acknowledge the truth of his conclusions, and to grant more than they intended when they set out; it is, in some degree, a species of sophistry, and by no means a pleasant mode of argument, because it seems to ensnare, tho' it may not always convince, and is capable of being applied to the support of error, as well as the discovery of truth, it has also an appearance of trifling, and seems to depend more upon words than upon things. The modest habit of doubting which he first introduced, and which became the distinction of the academic philosophy, might have been properly applied to religion, but certainly not to morality. Tho' Socrates was not superior to the common superstition of the age in which he lived, with regard to oracles, divinations, and prayers to the gods, yet he laid down a very proper distinction between those

things which we ought to ask of them, and those things in which we should trust to our own endeavors. "All things," says he, "which experience shews us, are to be acquired by teaching and practice, we should exert ourselves to procure ; if a man sows a field, or builds a house, or manages a state, he must learn the rules and methods by which these things are to be performed by instruction and exertion, but whether he shall reap the fruits of his field, or enjoy the house he has built, or succeed in well governing the state, these things belong to the gods, and he must ask their aid and opinion." His perpetual advice was, to dismiss all idle speculations on the nature of the universe, first, on account of their uncertainty, and next, for their inutility ; "For," says he, "there are an hundred opinions upon these subjects, and every man thinks another a fool who differs from him, and besides, they who arrive at the utmost knowledge of the powers of nature cannot control them at their will, as he can direct mankind who studies their passions and propensities ; they can only *know* these things, and all their knowledge ends in itself :" such was his opinion of all enquiries into nature ; his own enquiries were limited to human af-

fairs, he sought only to know the difference between piety and impiety, justice and injustice, honesty and dishonesty, wisdom and folly, valor and cowardice ; to enquire into the nature of politics and political duties, and to discover by what knowledge a man may be good and useful, and how far ignorance renders him mean, contemptible, and wretched.—The lessons which he taught others, he practised himself, for he was of all men the most temperate in his mode of living, the most moderate in his enjoyments, and the most patient in suffering ; he depended, indeed, more upon the efficacy of his example than of his instructions, yet was not inattentive either to his person or to his manner of living, for excess on one side, he thought no less culpable, than on the other. Virtue he considered as the effect of habit, and therefore he laid much stress on education. Such was his horror of intemperance, that he said, “A man who was devoted to the indulgence of his appetites is not to be trusted in any relation of life, either as a general, a statesman, a friend, a guardian, or a confidant.” When he was reproached by Antiphon for giving his instructions gratis, he replied, “ My reward is not money, but satisfaction. I am as much delighted with possessing

friends, as another man is with a rare bird, or a fine horse ; and as instruction comes with the greatest effect when disinterested, let us think it sufficient reward if we can do good to each other." He used to say, that the surest road to fame and honor, was to be what you wished to seem, for he that endeavored to deceive others with an appearance of what he did not possess, was as great a robber as he that deprived you of your goods or your money. It was a maxim with him, that a man who undertakes to manage public affairs, should decline no labor, danger, nor fatigue for the public good : "The road to virtue and honor," said he, "is rough and difficult, while that of pleasure is easy, soft, and smooth." His conversation with his son on the vice of ingratitude, deserves to be more fully translated, Vide Xen. Mem. lib. ii. cap. 2.

Having seen his eldest son Lamprocles speaking hastily and disrespectfully to his mother, "Tell me, my son," said he, "what sort of men do you think deserve to be called ungrateful?" "Those," said Lamprocles, "who having received favors, neglect to return them when they have an opportunity." "Do you think ingratitude to be a crime?" "Certainly." "Do you think, that as it is unjust to re-

duce our friends to slavery, but lawful to do so to our enemies, that we are justified in being ungrateful to the latter, but not the former?" "By no means, I think that whoever has it in his power to return a kindness, either to a friend or an enemy, if he neglects to do it, is guilty of injustice." "Then according to this doctrine, you think ingratitude to be the greatest injustice?" "Certainly." "And that so much the greater favor a man has received, he is so much more the unjust if he does not return them?" "No doubt." "Whom then can we find more indebted to others than children to their parents, who by giving them being, have put them in a state to enjoy all the pleasures of life, and all the goods which the gods have given to men. The mother bears the burden which she has received, loaded and oppressed even to the risque of her life, and imparts to it for nine long months her own sustenance; having at length passed the agony and danger of child-birth, she nourishes and tends the helpless infant, which is neither sensible of her kindness, nor to whom it is indebted; with ceaseless perseverance she continues to fulfil her duty in providing for it every thing wholesome and pleasant, and watches over it day and night, not even caring whe-

ther she shall be repaid for all her tender solicitude. Parents think it not enough merely to nourish their children, but when they perceive them old enough to learn, they not only impart to them their own knowledge, but send them at a great expence to be taught by others, to complete them in all wisdom."—
"But supposing they have done all this, and even more, do you think we are bound to bear all their ill humors? Do you think you are justified in speaking so harshly to your mother, when you know that what she said was with no ill intention, and that she wishes you well with all her heart?" "That I believe."—
"Can you then think that a mother who has been so kind to you, who has watched over you, and prayed for you in sickness, deserves the name of ill-natured? Do you not know that our city, tho' she takes no notice of other kinds of ingratitude, severely punishes those who are ungrateful to their parents, and rejects them from every public employment, rightly conceiving that such a man's sacrifices, even in his public capacity, could not be acceptable, and that he could not perform any other office in a manner to merit the approbation of the gods; nay, if a man should neglect to perform the accustomed funeral rites to his deceased

parents, the city makes a rigid enquiry after such culpable negligence. If you are wise, therefore, my son, you will entreat the gods to forgive you, if you have committed any offence against your mother, and you will take care that even men should not know it, lest they should shun your society, and you should be left without a friend, for they could have no dependence upon your gratitude, when they saw you ungrateful even to your mother." He gave nearly the same admonitions on the necessity of brotherly love and affection, regarding relationship to be the first ground of friendship:—"A good and faithful friend," said he, "is the best of all possessions, for the use of all others is inferior to that of a friend; he is above all price. There can be no friendship but in virtue, for men devoted to the indulgence of their appetites and passions cannot be friends to each other." Idleness he considered as the greatest of all evils, and on this subject gave some excellent advice to his friend Aristarchus, who having to maintain fourteen female cousins, who had come to him for protection during a civil disturbance, he advised him to give them employment, and after conquering some little scruples of false pride, he convinced him that by so doing, he was ren-

dering a service both to himself and his friends, upon which Aristarchus went and bought wool and wheels, and other implements of industry, and set the ladies to work, and in time they became so fond of it, that they reproached him with being the only idle person in the house. He gave similar advice to Eutherus, who having been reduced by the calamities of war to earn his daily bread, came to him in distress, under the apprehension, that when old age overtook him, he should no longer be able to gain a subsistence:—"Apply," said he, "to some one who will take you as a steward or superintendant of his estate;" after many objections on the score of servitude, to which Socrates easily replied, he too consented to take his advice.

On the duties of kings and ministers, no man has given better counsel:—"The management of a state," says he, "differs only in number from the management of a family; men are the subjects and the instruments in both, and ignorance is the only cause of failure in either." He had the highest opinion of political duties, for he said to Glaucon (a young man who had undertaken a public employment at too early an age, and disgraced himself by his ignorance), " You have chosen an employment

which is, of all others, the most honorable among men, and if you acquit yourself properly, there is nothing which you may not obtain; you may serve your friends, you may exalt your family, you may aggrandize your country; your name may be celebrated throughout the city, nay, thro' all Greece, and, like Themistocles, even among the barbarians, and wherever you go you will be reverenced and admired ; but take care, lest being ambitious of honor, you fall into disgrace, for is it not disgraceful for a man to undertake what he does not understand ? Consider whether those among your acquaintance who pretend to what they have no knowledge of, deserve praise or blame; whether they are to be admired or despised ? Look at those also who understand what they profess, and, in my opinion, you will find, that those who are honored and esteemed, are men of profound judgment and knowledge, and those who are despised, are ignorant pretenders ; if you wish, therefore, to be held in estimation, endeavor to make yourself well acquainted with whatever you undertake." His advice to a man who possessed superior talents for public affairs, but whose modesty prevented him from coming forward, will prove a useful lesson to many others of the same description :—

"Tell me," said he to Charmides, "what you should call a man who was qualified, in all respects, to bear away the prize in the olympic games, and by so doing, to obtain honor for himself and his country, and yet, thro' modesty, could not be prevailed on to enter the lists?"

"I should call him bashful and effeminate."

"And what should you call a man who was fully equal to the management of public affairs, and yet was unwilling to undertake the charge?"

"I should call him the same."

"I consider you to be such a one."

"Ah! Socrates, you greatly over-rate my powers."

"No man shines more in private circles, therefore why should they who can speak so well before men of knowledge and experience, hesitate to harangue before an ignorant multitude. I beg of you, do not shew such ignorance of yourself, nor fall into the common fault of modest men; do not be dispirited, but examine yourself, and neglect not the concerns of the public, for if they flourish by your means, you will not only benefit the city and your friends, but yourself."

Being asked whether he thought valor was acquired, or solely the gift of nature, he answered, "It is originally from nature, but may be improved by art and study." Justice and every other virtue he called wisdom. He

called those men envious who were distressed at the successes of their friends; upon which some one asked him, if it were possible for one man to have a regard for another, and be grieved at his prosperity. "Yes," said he, "there are many who, tho' they will not refuse to succor their friends in distress, cannot bear to witness their good fortune." "Kings and rulers," said he, are not those who merely bear an hereditary sceptre, nor those who are elected by the people, nor those who are chosen by lot, nor those who obtain power, by force or by fraud; but those who know how to govern." Being asked what he thought the best thing a man could obtain, he answered, "Success; but," said he, "I consider success and good fortune very different things,—the one is the result of well-judged endeavors, the other of chance." The conversation of Socrates, says Xenophon, was admirably adapted to arrest the attention of his hearers, and to be remembered with advantage, even out of his presence; for his discourse was both grave and lively. He considered education, joined to natural talents, capable of making men every thing that they ought to be, towards themselves, the public, and their friends. He reproved the audacity of those who, valuing

themselves upon their riches, thought they had no need of education or knowledge, and that money was enough to enable them to obtain any thing they pleased, and sufficient to ensure them respect and honor. "He must be a fool," said he, "who thinks he can obtain wisdom without instruction, or act wisely without either. Men of the greatest knowledge and abilities, who are not virtuous, are only more disposed and more able to do mischief." "Neither the violence of the people, nor the hopes of reward," says Xenophon, "nor any other consideration, could induce him to commit injustice, in the discharge of his public duties. He was accustomed to estimate the value of all sciences by their utility. He advised his friends, above all things, to attend to their health, and having consulted those who were best able to inform them, what sort of food, or what kind of exercise, is most conducive to their purpose, to adhere to it constantly. Leisure he considered as one of the most valuable possessions, knowledge as the greatest good, and ignorance as the greatest evil." Being asked what he thought the virtue of a young man, he answered, "Too much of nothing." "Is it better to marry, or live single?" said some one to him.—"Which ever you

do," said he, "you will repent." Xenophon finishes his Memorabilia with these emphatic words: "Such he was as I have represented him; pious beyond all other men; just, so as not to injure any one in the most trifling article, but ready to do them all the good in his power; temperate, so as never to prefer pleasure to virtue; prudent, so as never to be mistaken in his judgment of right and wrong, nor to need the advice of others, but able, at all times, to define the bounds of good and evil, and to exhort others to every thing that was noble and excellent; such he seemed to me--the best and the happiest of mankind; if any man thinks otherwise, let him compare him with others, and then determine."

The philosophy of Socrates embraced every department of human life, and tho' many of his conversations related by Xenophon, when divested of their original expression, appear trifling and tedious, yet from the whole might be formed a system of morality, comprehending all the relative duties, as forcible and comprehensive as any now extant. Instruction

* *Kai γαρ τὸ γῆματι, καὶ τὸ μὲν γῆματι κακότ;*

SUSARION.

conveyed by conversation, unless it is delivered in strong and pithy sentences, loses much of its effect by repetition; the morality of Socrates has the disadvantage of being delivered to us at second hand, and as it has neither the forcible brevity of proverbial sayings, nor the concise simplicity of direct advice, the spirit of it evaporates considerably, first, by being committed to writing, and next by translation; there is much wisdom and subtlety, no doubt, in his remarks, but many of them lose their effect by being deprived of the aid of his manner, language, and personal acquaintance; it is not to be wondered, therefore, if they do not strike us like the sententiousness of Confucius, the conciseness of the Proverbs, or the gentle simplicity of Jesus. The merit of Socrates is rather to be found in the general tendency of his conduct and sentiments, than in any particular conversation or maxims; the revolution he brought about in the pursuits of philosophy, and the effect of his doctrines on succeeding moralists, and on the general state of society, constitute his greatest claims to praise; and perhaps even now we feel the good of his morality, which is adapted to all the uses of common life, and reaches even to the lowest members of society, for his was no sour, au-

stere, nor savage system, it was calculated to make men satisfied with each other, and with themselves; temperance seasoned by mirth, by friendship, and by gaiety, were the great enjoyments which he held out, and nothing was forbidden by his philosophy but debauchery and iniquity. The tragedies of Euripides are replete with the most pure and benevolent morality, which he had learnt from the conversations of Socrates, and the stage of Athens became, from his example, a school of virtue; even Aristophanes, who ridiculed his failings, disdained not to be indebted to his morality, and from him down to Menander, the last comic writer of Greece, it is easy to discover the effects which the precepts of Socrates had produced in purifying the licentiousness of comedy. Socrates did not, like Pythagoras and Plato, travel to foreign countries in search of wisdom, he applied the suggestions of his own heart to the conduct of his own countrymen, and became prudent by other men's follies; what he saw and observed was taken from common life, and was therefore more generally useful than the metaphysical and mysterious science of Pythagoras, Aristotle, or Plato.

The great advantage which the morality of Socrates had over all that was taught before

him, was its reference to practical advantage, or in plainer words, to the principle of utility,* the only rational end of human conduct; for they who deny utility to be the basis of morals, bewilder themselves in metaphysical or religious refinements, which they fancy they comprehend because they are unintelligible, according to the old maxim of faith, “*Credo quia impossibile est.*” No good reason can be given for any action, but because a man conceives it to be useful to himself or others, or to both. There may be possibly a species of depravity, a kind of gratuitous wickedness which induces men to do mischief for mischief’s sake, but it is hardly credible, and if there is, the exception only proves the rule, for most men look either to pleasure or profit, even in their most trifling actions, and if they have also formed the habit of deriving pleasure from conferring it on others, they have arrived at the highest pitch of human excellence. Socrates seems to have proposed no other end than that of utility in all that he recommended; it is to him, therefore, that we are indebted for the best practical motive of human conduct,

* Atque ipsa utilitas, justi prope mater et aequi.

Horat. Ser. 3 lib. 1. v. 97.

and the only sure ground of confidence among men in their transactions with each other.—The innate love of truth, and the hopes of distant reward, are high-flown and extravagant subtleties, which men of inventive faculties and warm imaginations have delighted to indulge in, without considering the nature of man, or taking him as he is, and ever has been, in all the different stages of society.

Pleasure and pain, both of which resolve themselves into interest, are the great motives of human actions, tho' they have taken different shapes, and are capable of various modifications. On the degree of refinement which regulates our pleasures and our pains, depends the depravity or purity of mankind; when mere gross interest or indulgence is suffered to prevail over every other consideration, degraded indeed must be the state of human intercourse, but when pleasures, refined and generous, form our greatest delight, the nature of man is proportionably improved. Tho' Socrates seemed to believe in a future state of rewards and punishments, yet his moral doctrines needed no such support, and his own life was a sufficient evidence how greatly virtue conduces to happiness in this world; that it leads to happiness in another, no human evi-

dence can prove, nor is such a proof required by those who, whether happy or miserable, limit their researches to the bounds of their reason, and are content with nothing less than demonstrative evidence, viz. the evidence of experience. Socrates did more for mankind than any other heathen philosopher who lived before his time, and much less evil than Jesus Christ, for his morality has caused no blood-shed; the reason is obvious, it was not supported by any religious system.

A multitude of excellent moral precepts may be found in the Greek Anthology, in the minor Greek poets, and in the writers for the Grecian Stage.

The religion of Jesus Christ has, like the simple acorn which becomes an oak, spread over a great part of the civilized globe. So singular a phenomenon has been imputed to various causes, to me there seem but two which can account for it, and these are, first, the belief of its divine origin, for thirteen men believing themselves inspired, or only pretending to believe it, will soon make many others believe the same, in an age of ignorance and credulity, and when once any opinion has taken root, we all know how difficult it is to overturn it, even in an age more enlightened. The se-

cond cause which aided the propagation of Christianity, was the persecution which the first Christians endured ; for such is the natural perverseness of man, and his love of resistance, that he will even glory in suffering if he is sufficiently opposed, whereas without this opposition many ridiculous opinions, tho' they prevail for a while, at length die away and vanish before the light of reason and argument. The excellence or defects of Christian morality, compared with other systems, will tend to decide its merits as a rule of conduct.

“ Repent” is the first word in the religion of Jesus, by which he prepared his hearers for the reception of his precepts ; “ For the kingdom of heaven is at hand” was the motive which he urged to ensure their repentance, and yet that kingdom has never been seen on earth. The virtues by which heaven is to be gained, according to the Christian system, are not exactly calculated for the world, and it will be seen, that of the many precepts contained in the famous sermon on the Mount, there are but few which can be of any practical utility. Mortification, poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, and the love of persecution, may be adapted to men who voluntarily encounter the prejudices and practices of a corrupt genera-

tion, but they are little suited to the common intercourse of life, or to promote the general happiness of the world; they may belong to saints and martyrs, but they are not calculated for men who wish to enjoy themselves even with moderation and temperance; we must therefore pronounce, that much of the morality of Jesus is of too spiritual and refined a nature for the commerce of the world; or could we even suppose it to be brought to such a state as is there recommended, we should not consider it as any improvement, for the love of mortification, suffering, and mourning, is by no means a temper of mind calculated to promote rational happiness, or worldly prosperity; they may be forced upon us by inevitable circumstances, but they are not what we ought willingly to embrace if we wish to enjoy ourselves. Suffering, in many instances, may be the lot of man, and when it comes upon us we should bear it like men, but any system of religion or morality which teaches us to consider it as a mark of divine favor, or as the sum of earthly happiness, must first require the entire subjection of those rational faculties by which, in all other cases, we are enabled to judge of good and evil, of pain and pleasure, of happiness and misery; the same may be said of that

passive submission to ill-treatment which is recommended in another part of the same chapter, *Matt.* v.; it is not calculated for any state of society in which reasonable men would wish to live, for it tends to destroy the best part of our nature, viz. the spirit of resistance to oppression and tyranny. Having spoke thus freely of the Jewish and Christian religions, I am not conscious of reviving the objections of those who are called infidel writers, for I have read neither Collins, nor Tindal, nor Voltaire, nor, in short, any of the attacks upon Christianity; I speak from the unprejudiced efforts of my own reason, and the result of my own experience. I once believed that all the words of Jesus Christ were to be received with implicit faith, but since then I have ventured to examine which deserve to be rejected, and which to be received, for my judgment refused to submit to the pitiful subterfuge of partial interpretation. I never could believe that what was spoken plainly, could admit of any gloss or commentary. Tho' forgiveness of injuries is a refined virtue, submission to them is weakness and folly; the one is calculated to promote the peace of the world by putting an end to contention and animosity, the other is calculated to provoke insult, and to disturb the public

tranquillity ; the one sets bounds to resentment, the other gives room to boundless iniquity. The morality of Jesus, where it is delivered in parables, is subject to various applications, and to be variously interpreted, but where he speaks in plain and intelligible terms, it is an insult to common sense to suppose that he said one thing and meant another. "To take no thought for to-morrow," is a positive command, and it is illustrated by an illusion to the ravens, to the lilies, and to the sparrows. It is impossible for any man to speak in terms less ambiguous, but it does not suit the worldly advocates for Christianity to take the passage in its literal sense, and therefore to serve their purpose, it must be twisted to a meaning which was never intended. The leading features in the morality of Jesus Christ are purity of mind, patience, resignation, and self-denial, a love of peace, a hatred of contention, and contempt of all earthly enjoyment; these are the passive virtues recommended by the mild author of Christianity, but they who wish to find the more active ones, must look for them in the writings of the bold apostle of the Gentiles, who differed widely from his humble Master.

The sentiments of Jesus Christ, in many strong and leading points, resembled those of

the Essenes, a sect of the Jews, who placed the sum of human virtue in passive meekness and rigid self-denial, in bodily and mental purity, and a total dereliction of all worldly concerns, where they interfered in the smallest degree with the performance of religious duties. The pomp and ostentation of religion they abhorred, but the essence, life, and soul of it, they believed to consist in peace and tranquillity, and they were to so great a degree negligent of all worldly concerns, that had the world been peopled with Essenes, it would soon have been at an end. It is impossible to deny that Jesus borrowed many of their peculiar notions, tho' he was more active in making converts than they appear to have been, and whereas they generally sat still, and gave themselves little trouble about any thing but their salvation, he was constantly employed in going about to teach and to do good. Tho' the morality of Jesus is in many parts admirable for its sublime purity and benevolent intention, it is by no means remarkable for that comprehensive wisdom which embraces all the various relations of life, and describes with forcible accuracy the many important *minutiae* of human conduct; it is not like that of Confucius, Solomon, or Socrates, calculated

for the great theatre of the world, but to form the lives of Ascetics. Jesus Christ had never seen mankind in any enlarged sphere, nor conversed with them in many different departments of life, and his advice to one and all was the same; he did not seem to enter into the various turns of human passions, nor characterise the different ranks of life by appropriate admonition. Christianity is a religion for the poor and the afflicted, for to those who are unhappy in this world, it holds out the hopes of a better ; but it is not calculated for the rich, because it forbids so many of the enjoyments which nature and art have provided. One thing, however, there is in which Jesus Christ excels all other teachers of virtue, viz. the charm of those beautiful parables, or stories, which so admirably illustrate and enliven the gospel morality. Let us then take Christianity for what it is, and not endeavor to make it what it is not. It is an excellent epitome of the mild and gentle virtues, sometimes carried to excess, but it is not a comprehensive system of moral duty. It is certainly calculated to do considerable service to society, by allaying the tumult of the fiercer passions, but it is defective in not leaving room for that degree of exertion and intrepidity which are

required for overcoming strong difficulties.— Could its precepts be universally practised, which they never have been, it might transform the world into a scene of peaceful serenity; but as mankind are, and most probably ever will be, it is more likely to leave the weak a prey to the strong, than to reform the latter by its gentle advice; and it is for this reason that it has been so much altered by those, who have adapted it to their own purposes of worldly interest. It contains things which were new to the world at the time they were promulgated, but those which are new are not practicable, and those which are practicable are not new. It was not for the first time that men were exhorted to be just, charitable, and benevolent, but from the mouth of Jesus this advice claimed the sanction of divine authority, and therefore has acquired greater permanence and celebrity, and his religion having soon obtained a temporal establishment, it gained strength and renown, independent of its doctrines or morality. Its influence as a system soon began to decline, and is perhaps now in its lowest state of temperature, for almost all who attend on public worship, do it rather as a habit than a duty, and others who are rationally attached to this

belief, embrace it rather as a matter of taste and sentiment, than from the credit which they give to its doctrines or its evidences. This fact may be gathered both from the complaint of zealots, and the confession of its candid admirers. The age of implicit belief is over, and tho' the establishments of religion may remain for a while, they are preserved rather from motives of political convenience, than from a belief of the doctrines established ; they are propped up by the buttress of the state, but any great political change will be fatal to their existence. The state of the world, from the birth of Jesus to the present times, has never, in any degree, corresponded with the precepts of Christianity, which so far proves that it is impracticable as a general system. That the gentle virtues which it recommends, have found a residence in some milder natures, whose breasts were already prepared for their reception, is no argument to the contrary; it is sufficient for its adversaries if they prove that the general state of the world has never been conformable to the precepts of Jesus Christ, and it is certainly a strong argument against the truth of Christianity that it has been so much perverted and abused as to have caused more persecutions, bloodshed, and

misery, than any religious system that ever existed. I will not, however, deny, that the idea of the celestial purity and meekness which Christianity recommends, has in some measure tended to soften and refine the ruggedness of human nature. I wish to speak impartially, and to allow its due weight and influence to every species of moral instruction which has ever enlightened the world, and I am desirous to attribute to Christianity all the merit it may seem to deserve; I am therefore willing to allow, that tho' Christian purity, like Stoical virtue, are romantic fictions, yet that each of them, by holding up a model of excellence for our imitation, beyond our reach, has contributed to improve the temper of mankind, and to soften their intercourse with each other. The one attempts to make every thing subservient to reason, and the other to God, and both to eradicate the passions, to subdue the affections, and to bring every human propensity into direct subservience to its own doctrine. Our salvation, according to Jesus Christ, takes up the whole time of our existence, and a regard for it is incompatible with the indulgence of any of those pursuits which attach men to the world; the love of fame, power, or wealth, however moderated by reason and humanity,

are forbidden in the spiritual code of Jesus; the refinements of art and luxury, the pleasures of taste, the beauties of poetry, the sallies of wit and humor, are all to be repressed, lest they should withdraw us from that continual meditation on heavenly enjoyment, and that divine temper, which are required of the candidates for eternal felicity. To this it is owing that there are so few Christians among the professors of Christianity, and tho' many who call themselves such will be ready to controvert this statement, I have no fears about the final issue, for tho' the fact may be denied, it cannot be disproved. The direct tendency of all religion is to make men either hypocrites or enthusiasts. It is true that the Clergy have patched up a system of their own, which goes by the name of Christianity, by which they wish to have it believed that the morality of Jesus accords very amicably with the pursuits of the world; and there is no great harm in all this, only dont let them call it by a name which it does not deserve, and insult our commou sense with a pretence that they are acting according to the precepts of Jesus, when their conduct is in many points exactly the reverse, and their preaching only tends to explain away the force of his severe

morality; let them not call themselves Christians, while they are Epicureans at heart.—The words of Christ are every where plain and explicit; in opposition to the Mosaical law, which is founded on the just principles of retaliation and self-defence, he commands that we submit to violence and fraud, “for,” says he, “ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto ye, resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also, and if a man will sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.” Is this plain and intelligible, or does it need an interpreter,—is it practicable, or is it consistent with the practice of the world, and particularly of the Clergy when they sue for tythes? “Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy;” now in what passage of the Mosaical law it is said thou shalt hate thine enemy, I have not yet found, but in *Lev.* to which the margin refers, chap. xix. ver. 18, it is said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” but there is not a word about enemies. Jesus, however, having depreciated, or rather falsified the morality of Moses to exalt his own, says, in direct opposition to what

Moses is supposed to say, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you," *Matt.* v. 44. "Lay not up treasures for yourselves on earth," are the words of Jesus, but they have been little regarded by his worldly disciples. "Take no thought for your life, take no thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed, for your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of all these things, but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Does this, or does it not, recommend a trust in God for our daily bread, independent of our own exertions? The argument from the birds of the air, and the flowers of the field, puts the matter beyond a doubt, "for," says he, "they toil not, neither do they spin; if God then so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more shall he clothe you, O ye of little faith." The inference is pointed, and impossible to be misunderstood; yet I am perhaps to be told

that this advice was given only to his apostles, whose divine mission exempted them from all worldly cares and concerns. Was the form of prayer which immediately precedes these words, given to them only, and not to all his disciples? I blush for those who require their understandings to be convinced when they need only use their eye sight; such, however, is the effect of prepossession and prejudice.

The morality of the epistles being in some measure different from that of Jesus Christ, a few words may be requisite to shew wherein the difference consists. In the present Christian church there are three distinct codes of morality blended in one; the first is that of Jesus, the second is that of his disciples, and the third is that of Christian divines. The first I have spoken of already, the two last demand a short consideration. The first simple rudiments of Christian morality are to be found in the discourses of Christ, his disciples enlarged upon what he delivered, and our modern divines have completed the whole. I say nothing about the fathers of the church, because we are more indebted to them for doctrines than for any improvement in morality. St Paul enters more fully into the various duties of human life than any other of the dis-

ciples of Christ ; having seen more of the world, and been more conversant with mankind, he has marked more accurately than his master, the bounds of Christian submission and manly resistance. “*If it be possible* as much as in you lies, live at peace with all men,” *Rom.* xii. 18. “Be ye angry, and *sin not*, let not the sun go down upon your *wrath*,” *Ephes.* iv. 26. Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil, the Lord reward him according to his works, *2 Tim.* iv. 14. The apostle speaks repeatedly of his diligence in making collections for the different churches, and urges his new converts to patient industry :—“If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we should reap your carnal things,” *1 Cor.* ix. 11, and *Rom.* xv. 27.—“Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his own hands, that he may have to give to those that need,” *Ephes.* iv. 27. “Study to be quiet, and mind your own business, and to work with your own hands,” *1 Thess.* iv. 11. “Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought, but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you, not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us ; for we com-

manded you, if any will not work, neither let him eat, for we hear there are some among you working not at all; now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread," 2 *Thess.* iii. 8, 9, 10. "Having *food and raiment*, let us be therewith content," 1 *Tim.* vi. 8. "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased," *Heb.* xiii. 16. The apostle has here shewn a proper attention to worldly concerns, and in providing for the things of the spirit, has not, like his master, forgotten those of the flesh; the other apostles also join with him in enlarging the bounds of Christian morality, yet they still left much to be done by those who did not wish entirely to give up all civil and political rights; the divines of modern Europe therefore have completed what was wanting to make their religion a practicable system, but it is not pure Christianity, for according to the example of Christ and his apostles, the Quakers are the best Christians, and those who wish to be convinced of the fact, I refer to that powerful defence of their tenets and conduct, Barclay's *Apology*.

The various duties of morality are no where

more copiously explained, nor enforced with greater strength of argument and language, than in the sermons composed by the most eminent divines of the church of England ; they may be displayed with greater eloquence by those of the old church of France, but an address to our reason will stand the test of time better than one to our feelings, and Barrow, South, Sherlock, Atterbury, and Blair, will be read when Bourdaloue and Masillon have ceased to be admired. If our English divines have any fault, independent of their doctrines, it is that they have dwelt too long on their subjects, and wire-drawn them so far as frequently to deserve the charge of verbiosity. And here I will add a tribute of grateful praise to the very excellent practical sermons of Mr Warner ; if they are a little disfigured by a redundancy of language, it is a fault which may be forgotten, when it is remembered that they are the first sermons published by any divine of the church of England which ever ventured to recommend pure Christianity independent of creeds and systems, and to inculcate liberality of sentiment.

The maxims of Rochefoucault, which I have proposed to consider next in succession, seem a libel on human nature ; for if they are in any

degree a faithful picture of mankind, it may be fairly said that every word which Jesus Christ spoke was uttered in vain. If Rochefoucault is right, there is no such thing as virtue in the world, but the whole is a gloomy abode of misery, peopled by selfishness with the worst of vices, envy, pride, malice, revenge, jealousy, distrust, and hatred ; these he wishes us to believe are palpable and evident, but virtue is only a semblance, a name, a phantom, a pretence, a deceitful appearance. This is the grand principle which pervades every page of his book, this is the result of his experience in the world, which he delivers to others as the guide of their conduct and the ground of their confidence ; this is the armor with which we are to set out in life, prepared to encounter the demon of self-love, and defend ourselves against its attacks ; this is the opinion which we are to form of our fellow-creatures, and by which we are to direct our conduct towards them ; this is the rule and line of our actions by which we are to arrive at happiness and promote the happiness of others. If this be true, better were it never to have been born, or to leave the world at once and dwell with the generous beasts of the forest, than to remain with base, deceitful, selfish man, who lives

under a perpetual disguise even from himself, and who puts on the appearance of virtue only the more surely to deceive. Mankind, however, with all their failings and vices, are not what *Rochefoucault* has represented them ; his account might be true of the society with which he used to live, but to say it is true of all the world, is a false, scandalous, and malicious libel on human nature. The form of maxims suited this selfish philosopher better than that of precepts ; from the opinion he had formed of mankind, he could have little confidence in the efficacy of his advice, if he had even wished to make them better, but it does not appear that he had any such intention. He wished to have it known that he was not deceived by the disguises of the world, and he has left behind him a legacy of misanthropy, which, if not wasted by some future generation more prodigally benevolent, may descend to a remote posterity. Even now, however, notwithstanding the vices of the present age, there is such a thing as active benevolence, there are men who feel a pleasure in giving pleasure to others, and soothing their distresses. It has long been a maxim of morality, that true self-love and social, are the same ; but some men of narrow minds and low education maintain

that self-love ends only in self-interest, and that charity both begins and ends at home, whereas the nature of man is, and has been in all ages the same, and most probably will remain so, but it is capable of greater or lesser degrees of refinement, like the ore of precious metals, and as he acts from a narrow or an enlarged, from a gross or a refined, from a mere selfish or a benevolent motive, he is proportionably improved.

Rochefoucault conceived that all men acted from the low and sordid principle of self-interest, without supposing it possible that they could receive any pleasure from the consciousness of giving pleasure to others. He was right inasmuch as he believed this to be the motive of a great part of the world, but he erred most egregiously in conceiving it to be the sole motive of action with all mankind. The words public virtue, patriotism, or benevolence, are hardly to be found in his writings, and where they are, it is only for the purpose of denying their existence; hence it is that we meet with such maxims as those here cited.

“ 29. The evil which we do, does not draw upon us so much persecution and hatred as our good qualities.”

“ 39. Interest speaks all sorts of languages, and plays all sorts of characters, even that of disinterestedness.”

“ 62. Sincerity is the openness of the heart, we find it in very few people, and when it is to be found, it is only a species of dissimulation the better to entrap the confidence of others.”

“ 69. If there is any such thing as pure love, it is concealed at the bottom of our hearts, even from ourselves.”

“ 78. The love of justice is in most men only a desire to avoid injustice towards themselves.”

“ 93. Old men love to give good advice only because they can no longer give bad examples.”

“ 242. We easily console ourselves for the disgraces of our friends, when they give us an opportunity to shew our kindness for them.”

“ 312. Interest, which is accused of all our crimes, deserves generally the praise of our virtues.”

“ 254. We seldom call those men of sense who are not of our opinion.”

Tho' I have selected a few of the most offensive of *Rochefoucault's* maxims, it is not to be supposed that they are all of this complexion and tendency, and wherever he enters

upon general subjects of life and manners, it is but justice to say, that he shews an acuteness of remark, and an acquaintance with mankind, rarely to be equalled by any preceding or succeeding moralist, but his remarks are all of an ill-natured turn (for he looks at human nature on the dark side), and shews us rather what we should avoid than what we should adopt. He has generalised the result of his observations on mankind into short and pithy maxims, which may be read for their utility, as the preparations of anatomists which are preserved in spirits, are consulted, but not admired. Lord Chesterfield seems to have formed his morals and his conduct on the model of Rochefoucault's maxims; it is impossible to produce a happier specimen of their consequences; the pupil and the teacher are, however, sinking fast into oblivion, from which they will probably never be recalled.

The Economy of Human Life had once a very rapid circulation among all ranks, but is now chiefly read by the lower orders, and by them with great improvement; it owed its short-lived celebrity to the aid of a great name, and when the charm was dissolved, it seemed to lose all its merits; a striking proof with how little judgment most people read, and how

much many books are indebted to fashion for their popularity ; yet notwithstanding this little epitome of morality obtained a higher rank than it deserved, it is by no means devoid of merit, nor to be read without instruction ; tho' it neither contains many things new, nor in a new dress, yet the mixture of scriptural and oriental phraseology in which it is written, gives it a venerable air of sanctity, which cannot fail to attract the multitude, and as the morality it delivers is of the purest standard, and the precepts it contains adapted to every condition of life, it cannot be read by those whose minds are not habituated to any great efforts of reasoning, without improvement and delight.

The maxims and advice of the celebrated Doctor Franklin, contained in his short essays, tho' they shew much wisdom and knowledge of the world, can hardly deserve the name of a system ; they are rather rules of prudence than principles of morality, but are worthy to be read and remembered by all those who wish to direct their conduct wisely, from the experience of others. They are not mere maxims of worldly wisdom, like those of Rochefoucault, derived from a knowledge of the worst part of mankind, they are lessons of that pru-

dence which is calculated to produce happiness in its final consequences, and is sometimes in direct opposition to the practice of the world; they contain the advice of a plain honest man, content with moderate enjoyments, and moderate wealth ; they aim at nothing great, and descend to nothing mean ; they tend to keep the hands pure from iniquity, and the heart free from care ; they are not numerous, deep, nor comprehensive, but they contain much wisdom in a small space.

Apologues, fables, and stories, are a very ancient mode of instruction, and not abandoned even in modern times. In the infancy of society, as in the infancy of man, the imagination is stronger than the judgment, and reason requires to be instructed by the gentle method of amusement ; yet it is only in this infant state that such soothing arts should be employed, for men more advanced in age and civilization must be taught their duty by a direct appeal to their reason, and be told not merely to do good, but why some actions are to be avoided and others performed. “*Prodesse delectando*” is a maxim for children, or for men like children, but those who expect to arrive at the maturity of reason, must be instructed at a proper time in the nature of man, and the

moral relations of society ; but for the infant mind no species of instruction can be devised so appropriate as that which at once delights the imagination, excites the reason, and employs the memory. The moral derived from an analogue, or a fable, exercises the ingenuity to find out the application, but a story which is a copy of life, comes at once to the youthful heart, and carries its application along with it; a fable may be mistaken or misapplied, but a story needs no comment ; a fable paints by distant similitude, but a story comes at once to the point intended. The fables of Pilpay and Longman are all that we have received from antiquity, and they have served as models for modern times ; those of Æsop are a modern forgery. Gay and More are the best English fabulists, but the former is superior to the other in simplicity, which is the great merit of a fable ; on the whole, however, it is a mode of instruction which is by no means so well adapted to a northern imagination as to the warm temper of the East, where even now almost every thing is spoken in tropes and figures.— A child will take very little interest in the conversation of lions and horses, compared to that of its own species, and were it not for their moral, fables could hardly even be en-

dured ; a proof of their unpopularity is the very few we have in our language which are not borrowed. The abundance of tales, novels, romances, allegories, and poems, which have been invented for the purpose of conveying moral instruction, is sufficiently great to excuse a particular mention of any ; there is one, however, which claims to be exempted from this general omission : the Telemachus of Fénelon has been read in all countries, and translated into all languages, not only as a book of instruction for youth, but for the improvement of men at all ages ; yet tho' excellent in many respects, it is not without faults ; the episodes are in general too long, the moral lessons are too frequently introduced, and do not always arise naturally out of the subject, and the whole is too tedious not to fatigue a youthful mind, which to be pleased, requires a frequent variation of books and subjects, and its greatest fault is monotony ; there is little distinction of character, and the manners of different nations are ill-preserved, barbarians speak the language of philosophers (vide Book x. at the beginning), and Greeks speak the sentiments of Frenchmen ; the author appears every where too much ; both from the mouth of Mentor, and from others the most opposite,

many particulars are related too minutely, which spin out the book to a tedious length; its principal merit is in the excellent moral lesson it gives to kings and princes on the means of making their subjects happy, by promoting the useful arts, by extending civilization, and avoiding useless wars, but these are repeated too frequently, so as to excite weariness rather than to keep the attention constantly alive, which is the great point in all books in which moral instruction is to be conveyed; its other excellencies are the advice it conveys to young men to avoid the seductions of sensual pleasure, and the manner in which it is written, its purity and elegance.

The writings of Seneca are an inexhaustible storehouse of morality, and were it not for the quaint, affected, and antithetic stile in which they are conveyed to us, and for a few peculiarities of the Stoical sect, they would be unexceptionable. It is true he has in some measure softened these peculiarities by a due admixture of the Epicurean philosophy, but some portion of impracticable theory still remains. On the whole, however, few writings on morality may be read with greater advantage than those of Seneca, for the sententious aphoristic stile of the author, leaves much to be laid

hold of, which in more diffuse writers would elude observation.

The philosophy of Epictetus resembles, in many points, that of his master Zeno, tho' it seems sometimes to have been carried to a more extravagant pitch, and to bear a likeness to the passive system of Christianity; he was born a slave, and therefore accustomed to submission, so that his doctrines have somewhat of a slavish tendency; he pushed the extravagances of his sect to their utmost length in denying pain to be an evil, and in his utter contempt for all bodily pleasures; he submitted, and wisely no doubt, with entire resignation to all the ills of life, from this consoling reflection, "I am in the place to which Providence has destined me, and to complain of my lot is to offend him."—Against natural evil this is a natural consolation, but so far as it prevents exertion to overcome the difficulties of life, it has a dangerous and debasing tendency. It is not requisite to recount many of the sentiments of Epictetus which relate to patience, and resignation to the will of Providence; his disciple Arrian has left a full relation of his discourses in Greek, which have been translated into English by a learned female.

The most copious and useful of all the Grecian philosophers is Plutarch; he had profited by the wisdom of those who had gone before him, and also written largely on many subjects which were untouched; yet he is by no means a correct or polished writer, his language is not that of the purest æra of Greek literature, his invention is fertile, yet not sufficiently pruned nor regulated; his similes and allusions are rich, numerous, and illustrative, yet sometimes too abundant, and his quotations are too frequent, and savor of an ostentation of learning, which is not to be found in the purest Greek writers; his repetition of the same idea and the same quotations are so frequent as to become tiresome; his language is sometimes copious, even to redundancy, and his subjects are not always treated with the same degree of attention and solidity; there are in all his writings evident marks of hasty composition, they are the effusions of a mind well stored with general ideas, which can dilate them at pleasure, without much depth of reflection, but possessing a copiousness of language, and a considerable quickness of invention; there is not the profundity, weight, and conciseness of Aristotle, but there is what is much better, a flow of ideas suited to the

comprehension of common capacities, and calculated for the improvement of man in every rank of life. Aristotle wrote only to philosophers, but Plutarch wrote for the multitude; he embraced the whole circle of duties, not indeed with the acute comprehensive conception of the Stagyrite, but with the labored accuracy of a man who, tho' deficient in the faculty of generalizing ideas, yet possessed the more useful talent of forming, with minute diligence, a copious detail of particulars; few men will feel themselves interested in the general descriptions of Aristotle, but it is hardly possible for any man to read Plutarch, without seeing some of his vices, or passions, or failings, minutely analyzed. Plutarch is an unequal writer, he sometimes expresses himself with great force and animation, and at other times drags on his sentences with langor and heaviness, and writes as if he thought himself compelled to write; this is evident even in one of his best treatises, that on education, and in many others much more so, yet on the whole there is not one ancient moralist who may be read with so much advantage, for he is free from the extravagant peculiarities of any sect, and having formed his philosophy from the study of them all,

has more excellent notions of morality than can be attributed to any; he shews many marks of old age, particularly in his love of anecdote and quotation, and in his dwelling for a long time on one idea, which, in familiar language, we term prosing; but even with all his faults, he deserves to be read by every man who wishes to attain just notions of his duty and his interest; no writer has ever shewn greater proofs of a fertile and well-stored mind than Plutarch, but he wants that arrangement and regularity which are requisite to avoid fatiguing the attention of his readers, and yet, on the other hand, he is free from that tiresome excess of method which is so perplexing in Aristotle and his disciples, who split and divide things from the desire of being accurate, till they have hardly any meaning whatever.

Tho' it is the fashion of the present day to reprobate the study of the learned languages, yet, for my own part, considering the many excellent works they contain, and that they are the pure source from whence all modern wisdom springs, I should rather wish they were more studied, for they must always suffer by a translation. From reading Plutarch alone, much advantage might be derived, and

I see no harm that could possibly happen, if many of our gentry who now employ themselves in gaming, driving, and other idle diversions, were to spend their time in study, moderately diversified with wholesome exercise. Notwithstanding the disadvantage to which Plutarch must appear in an English dress, I will, for the sake of those who are desirous of forming some idea of his morality, but are prevented from their ignorance of the language in which he wrote, attempt to translate some of the best parts of his different treatises, which may perhaps be the means of exciting those who are better qualified, to undertake a complete translation of his best moral treatises.

The whole of his tract on education deserves to be better translated than it ever has been. "Wherever it happens," says he, "that a mother cannot suckle her own children, the greatest care should be taken in providing a nurse; she should not be of the common rank, but a woman of decent manners and situation in life, for the manners of a child begin very early to be formed—youth is soft and plastic, and whatever they are taught makes a deep impression on the minds of children. When they are arrived at an age to be put under the

care of a master, we must be particularly attentive whom we choose, so that our children shall not, thro' our ignorance, be committed to servile, vulgar, or weak men; the present negligence of parents in this respect is more than ridiculous; for every other purpose and employment they pick out the very best of their slaves, but if they can find one who is a drunkard, a glutton, and good for nothing else, him they choose to take care of their children;—we ought above all things to seek out for masters who are blameless in their lives, spotless in their morals, and eminent for their knowledge; for the source and root of every thing that is valuable in life is a good education.” He then points out with great force and accuracy the motives which induce men to commit their children to insufficient teachers, and eloquently exclaims, “Good God, can any man who bears the name of father, prefer any consideration to that of the instruction of his children.” To sum up the whole at once,” says he, “the first, and midst, and last, of all things, is a good education, as the means of virtue and happiness, for compared with this, all other things are perishable, trifling, and unworthy our regard. High birth is desirable, but it is derived from our ances-

tors; riches are valuable, but they belong to Fortune, since she takes them from those who have them, and gives them to those who have them not; and abundance of riches is a mark for slaves and flatterers to shoot at, and what is more than all, they are generally the portion of rascals. Fame is honorable, but uncertain; beauty is desirable, but it quickly fades; health is valuable, but soon changes; strength is to be wished for, but is soon destroyed by sickness or old age, and he that prides himself in his strength gives a proof of his folly, for what is the strength of man compared with that of beasts; education then is the only thing which is imperishable and divine." Where all is so excellent, it is difficult to select, yet I will venture to give a few more of his remarks on education. "As I advise parents to prefer the education of their children to every thing else, so I advise that they should choose that which is sound and solid, and keep their children as far as possible from popular levities, for that which pleases the multitude displeases the virtuous few." "With regard to the disposition of the mind, it should neither be too bold, nor timid, for the one produces impudence, and the other falls into servility; the great art is to preserve the medium in all

things." "I advise that we instruct our children in proper pursuits by reasoning and advice, and not by blows and severity, which are more suited to slaves than to free men." "It is better for the resentment of a parent to be sharp and severe, than settled and lasting, for implacability is no small proof of hatred." This treatise is the only one on general education which the ancients have left us. Xenophon has one on the education of the Spartans, and every one is acquainted with his Cyropædia. In the republic of Plato are instructions for education, but Plutarch is the only one who treats the subject singly, and the mode in which he has done it entitles him to the gratitude of posterity, for it contains much valuable matter, which has been since expanded and spread over a very wide surface, and were it the only treatise on the subject now extant, we need not be at a loss how to educate our children prudently and virtuously. Why it is not more attended to, and does not produce more advantage, is worth enquiry, and the answer is obvious; it is not from any deficiency in its own merits, but because it is so little known and read by those to whom education is entrusted, and because the taste of the age is so much turned to novelty,

that very few think it worth their while to enquire what was written about education a thousand years ago. I much question whether there are an hundred parents and schoolmasters throughout the nation whoever read the book at all, and of those perhaps not ten who have ever attempted to reduce it to practice, so little disposition is there in mankind to follow good advice.

His cautions to young men in reading the poets is the next of his treatises, as they are placed in the edition of Wyttenbach, and too much can hardly be said in its praise, tho' it must be confessed that it is sometimes rather trifling, yet what he has said of poetry in general, certainly contains great truth—

Φαεμανα πολλα μεν εσθλα μεριγμενα πολλα τι λυγα.

“ Poetry,” says he, “ is by no means to be neglected by those who engage in the study of philosophy, but philosophy must be applied to poetry; let us accustom ourselves to seek for instruction united with pleasure, or otherwise to reject it entirely.” “ The representation of wicked actions, if they are attended with shame and injury to those who commit them, does good rather than harm, and the difference between philosophy and poetry is this,—Philosophers, in giving admonition or

reproof, make use of living and actual examples, poets invent theirs for the same purpose." "Let a young man remember, when he reads the poets, that poetry is a representation of manners, morals, and men, not pure nor faultless, but composed of passions, false opinions, and ignorance, which the goodness of their disposition frequently leads them to correct." "To prepare a young man in this manner, so that he shall partake of the elevation and enthusiasm attending good actions, and feel an abomination and disgust at vicious ones, will enable him to read the poets without the slightest disadvantage; but he who admires and embraces every thing, and suffers his judgment to be enslaved by the power of a great name, like those who imitated the crookedness of Plato, and the stammering speech of Aristotle, will be perpetually in danger of doing wrong."

The treatise on Hearing, contains many excellent observations, of which the following may be noted: "You who have often heard, that to follow God and to obey reason are the same things, will not consider the passing from a boy to a man to be an entire freedom from restraint, but the change of a master, and that of a hired teacher for a divine guide,

which they who follow, alone are free; for they alone who learn to wish for what they ought, may be said to live as they wish; to follow our unrestrained, irrational appetites, is a kind of liberty which is mean and contemptible, and always attended with repentance."

The treatise, "How to distinguish between a flatterer and a friend," contains a great deal of valuable advice from one who had well studied the world.

"How a man may judge of his progress in virtue," is another excellent treatise, of which the following are a few of the best parts. "To despise those things which the generality of men admire, tho' worthy of contempt, requires a strong and a firm understanding." The farmer loves best to see those heads of corn which bend to the earth, because those which rise again from their lightness, are empty and good for nothing; like them too, those young men who study philosophy, and yet are empty and without weight, put on all the external appearance of wisdom in their figure, gait, and countenance, and are full of that haughtiness and contempt which spares no one."

The treatise, "How a man may derive ad-

vantage from his enemies," contains some very weak passages, in which the reasoning is bad, and the illustration worse, yet on the whole it cannot be read without some advantage and improvement.

The next treatise is that, "On having many friends." "Nothing is more contemptible, more dangerous, and a greater proof of a light mind, than hasty friendship, and yet nothing in the world is more common." The advice of Plutarch, therefore, can never be unseasonable, because it may serve to guard us against imposition, and against the effects of our own levity. "Tho' it is not requisite," says he, "that we should have only one friend, yet let there be one more dear than the rest, and like the child of our old age; a man with whom, according to the old proverb, we have eaten a bushel of salt,—not like the friends now-a-days, with whom it is enough to have dined once or twice, to have met at billiards, at tennis, at the forum, or at a tavern; for when we see a man in the house of the great and rich, who shakes hands with, and is spoken to by, a number of people, we say how happy he must be who has such a number of friends; we see also a great many flies in a large kitchen, but neither the one nor the other remain long

when there is nothing to be had." "True friendship requires three things; virtue to make it honorable, familiarity to make it pleasant, and good offices to make it useful."—"The consideration that friendship must arise from congeniality of mind is the greatest preventive against contracting it suddenly."

The consolatory advice of Plutarch to Apollonius on the death of his son comprehends every topic of consolation which the subject could afford. "Now," says he, "that time which brings all things to maturity, may seem to have ripened your affliction, and the disposition of your mind may seem to require the aid of your friends, I have thought it right to offer you such consolation as may tend to the remission of your grief, and put an end to vain and useless sorrow. To grieve and lament for the death of a son is a feeling that seems to have its origin in nature, and not to be in our power to control; and I do not agree with those who praise that savage, hardened apathy, which is neither natural nor useful, for it seems to deprive us of all that kindness which arises from loving and being beloved, and which above all things it is desirable to preserve. On the other hand, to be grieved beyond measure, and to nourish our grief, is

equally contrary to nature, and arises from our own mistaken notions; on this account, therefore, it should be dismissed as injurious and improper, and by no means becoming a man of prudence; but moderate sorrow is not to be reproved. What is there so hard and so distressing in death? Why should that which is so natural and so familiar to us be so difficult to bear? Why is it wonderful if that which is subject to be cut asunder, should be cut; if that which is liable to consume, should be consumed; if that which is formed to burn, should be burnt, or that which is corruptible, should corrupt? and when is it that we are not subject to death?"

" Some men are particularly affected by premature death; but even this admits of so much consolation, that it is found in almost every poet. Since it is uncertain whether they who die are not taken away from misfortunes, we should not lament them as deprived of all the good we expected them to have obtained."

His precepts of health deserve our particular regard, for an attention to health is a moral duty, if our lives are of any importance to ourselves or our friends; and yet how many men do we see who, without being guilty of any vice or intemperance, hasten their death

by neglecting to avoid those things which are unwholesome, even when taken moderately. To literary and studious men he particularly recommends moderate exercise, and frequently to read aloud, not violently, nor so as to injure themselves, but to give exertion to their lungs. “ Rubbing the body is particularly wholesome, because it gives a degree of motion to the intestines, promotes circulation, and diffuses a gentle warmth over the whole frame ; let the criterion of its sufficiency be the pleasure it creates, for when it becomes troublesome it ceases to be healthy.” Against the filthy and pernicious custom of taking emetics for the sake of eating a greater quantity than can be digested at once, he argues with becoming indignation, and advises those to avoid it who have any regard to their health. He reprobates the custom of eating and drinking at stated times as inconvenient, unsocial, and troublesome.” “ Health, he says, is not to be purchased by indolence or repose ; a man might as well think of preserving his eye-sight by never using his eyes, or his voice by never speaking. A little experience will teach us what is wholesome or pernicious, and we ought rather to enquire what meats are healthful than what are pleasant to the palate.” His

advice to married people contains many useful lessons:— “ Herodotus was wrong in saying, that a woman puts off her modesty with her clothes; for, on the contrary, she rather puts on her modesty in their place, which between husband and wife is a pledge of their love to each other. Women, who by force and violence, attempt to turn their husbands from luxury and expence, only irritate them the more; but if they endeavor gently to persuade them, more easily obtain their purpose. If it is indecent for a man and wife to kiss and embrace each other in company, how much more to scold and reproach. Those husbands who do not live cheerfully with their wives, nor partake with them in jesting and laughter, teach them to seek for other pleasures, when they are not in their presence. A woman should have no male friends, but those who are the friends of her husband. A husband ought to command his wife not as a master does a slave, but as the mind does the body, sympathizing with it and being united by the ties of benevolence. The quarrels that are begun in bed, where can they be finished?” In his treatise on moral virtue he seems to incline to the opinion of Aristotle, that virtue consists in the

formation of good habits, and acting in all things so as to preserve the medium.

The moral writings of Plutarch, we are informed from his own authority, were drawn from the stores of his common-place book, and it appears that they were written loosely and without any correction; in this respect he by no means rivals Johnson, who wrote his moral essays even with less preparation; for tho' perhaps not always equal in point of matter, they are superior in composition and finishing.

The treatise on tranquillity of mind, or contentment, tho' excellent throughout, appears to be composed of loose thoughts hastily put together.—“In violent afflictions,” says he, “nothing can contribute so much to tranquillity as to remember all the good things we have enjoyed, and by blending them with the bad to extract the bitter from the latter. Some men will say with peevish ingratitude, What have we that is so great? Let him rather recollect what have we not?—One man has glory, another comforts, another a family, another friends. Antipater the Tarsean, when he was contemplating upon his death-bed all the good that had happened him, did not forget a prosperous voyage which he once had from Cilicia

to Athens. Even common things are not to be neglected; for we should remember and rejoice that we live, that we are healthy, that we enjoy the light of the sun, that we do not suffer by war or sedition, that we possess the earth to cultivate, and that we can dispose of our time at our pleasure; and we shall the more enjoy the things that are present, if we think on those that are not, remembering how desirable health is to those that are sick; peace to those that are at war, and to him that is unknown and a stranger, to possess friends and credit; by this means we shall know how to value things when they are gone, and not to despise them when they are present." "In the Olympic games it is not allowable to conquer if we choose our antagonist, but in life we are often placed in a better state than others without any exertion of our own, and are envied ourselves rather than have cause to envy others." "When we hear other people speak contemptuously of us because we are not consuls, or officers of state, we ought to return for answer, that we think ourselves highly fortunate, for we are neither compelled to beg, to labor, nor to flatter for a living." "Let us not vilify, nor condemn nature, as having left us nothing free from the power of

fortune, but on the contrary (knowing that there is a very small part of man which is rotten and vulnerable by her, since every thing which is excellent is in our own power, such as reputation, knowledge, virtue, which have an existence firm and incorruptible), let us with invincible boldness look towards the future, and say to fortune as Socrates said to his judges, " You may kill me, but you cannot injure me." " To him that by the power of his virtue, and his nobler part, is enabled to live happily, what can give pain or disturbance? for he may say to fortune, I defy you, I have prevented you all access to me, not by bars and locks and walls, but by reason and philosophy, which all may partake of who choose."

The treatise on Brotherly Love, among some foolish, contains many wise remarks; the same may be said of that on Affection to our Children.

" Whether vice alone can make men unhappy," is a short treatise; one sentence, however deserves to be translated—" Does vice require the aid of fortune to make men unhappy? No, she neither sends against us troops of robbers, storms of hail, nor wicked judges; but she strikes the rich, the prosperous, and

the fortunate, consuming them by lusts, enflaming them with passions, wasting them with superstition, and torturing them with malice."

The subject of garrulity he has treated with great force and ability: "Philosophy," says he, "undertakes a difficult task when she pretends to cure garrulity." "The fault of not being able to hold one's tongue arises from not being able to listen." "To hear, and to be heard, are two great things which a talkative man can never acquire: other irregular desires may obtain their ends, such as avarice, vanity, and the love of pleasure, but garrulity never can; a talkative man seldom gains hearers, for every one avoids him." "No words that can be spoken are sometimes so expressive as silence; you may at a proper time tell what you have properly kept secret, but you can never keep secret what you have once told; for this reason it appears to me, that tho' men may teach us to speak, it is the gods only who can teach us to be silent." "Curiosity is the constant attendant of garrulity; but they who wish to talk much, must have something to tell, and they are particularly curious in enquiring after secrets which afford a constant subject to their babbling loquacity." "Great talkers often

betray themselves." "Barbers are generally great talkers, and most idlers fly to them to gratify their impertinent curiosity." Among the higher ranks in former times, a barber's shop was the emporium of news, it is now frequented only by the lower.

Plutarch has suggested several remedies for garrulity, few of which, I doubt, can ever be of use, for it is a disease which generally arises from a want which can never be supplied. "Let us," says he, "always avoid to answer, when a question is asked of another." "Some men talk from a desire of shewing their knowledge; one because he has read history, another because he has studied grammar, and a third because he has travelled; but this ought to be avoided, for garrulity is thus ensnared as animals are, by that kind of meat of which they are the fondest." Curiosity being nearly allied to garrulity, is the next subject treated. "Whenever," says he, "we perceive ourselves affected by turbulent passions, which bring storms and darkness over the mind we should endeavor by expelling and rooting them out, to restore tranquillity and sun-shine to the breast, but if we cannot succeed in that at once, we should give a different turn to them, to render them more harmless. For instance, curiosity,

which is often only an impertinent desire of being acquainted with other people's faults, and neither free from envy nor malice, should be transferred from without, and turned inwardly, and if you are pleased to hear a recital of faults, you will find sufficient employment at home, in surveying the errors of your life, the passions of your soul, and your wilful neglect of duties various and important." "A curious man," says Plutarch, "is of more use to his enemies than himself, for he brings their faults to light, and shews them what they ought to do, and what to avoid, while he neglects every thing relating to his own concerns from his great anxiety about those of another." "The great remedy for trifling curiosity is to turn our attention to things of moment; study and enquire into the great operations of nature, or if your mind is not sufficiently exalted for this, examine the records of history, or pry into the anecdotes of antiquity, cull plants and flowers, or gather shells, stones, and butterflies, rather than be troublesome to your acquaintance; and if you must be employed, let it be innocently." The advice of Plutarch, tho' excellent, is hardly practicable by those who have long formed contrary habits, for to people advanced in life, it is difficult to change

their pursuits, but young ones may be taught to amuse themselves even with trifles, so as to avoid being troublesome or offensive.

Avarice is a vice even of the greatest minds, tho' it ought to find residence only in the least. Plutarch has a treatise which admirably displays its whole deformity. "Money," says he, "cannot purchase quiet, magnanimity, fortitude, content, nor constancy, neither can riches carry with them contempt of riches, nor the possession of superfluities make men satisfied with moderate enjoyment. From what evil then can riches liberate us, if not from avarice; the desire of drinking may be quenched by drinking, and gluttony may be satisfied with eating, but neither gold nor silver can quench the thirst for money, nor can avarice ever be satisfied." "Some will pretend that they are keeping up money for their children or their heirs, tho' they give them not a farthing while they live; such men are like mice eating up the earth that contains particles of gold, which can never be recovered till the mice are killed." A sufficient specimen has now been given of the morality of Plutarch, sufficient, I trust, to induce those who have perused thus much to refer to the original source for a more copious draught.

The next philosopher who deserves our attention is Marcus Antoninus, and a more singular spectacle is hardly to be found in the history of mankind than that of a mild benevolent philosopher, seated on the throne of the most extensive empire the world ever saw, when that empire was overwhelmed by tyranny and luxury. Antoninus undertook to cleanse the Augean stable of the state, but neither the stream of philosophy, nor even the stream of the Alpheus, was sufficient to purify such accumulated corruption,—no single man was equal to the task, and tho' he succeeded for a time in reviving a spirit of purity and patriotism among the degenerate Romans, yet almost in his life-time that spirit became extinct, and the succeeding reign of his son Commodus was even more profligate and nefarious than any of those who preceded him. The philosophy of Antoninus, tho' professedly founded on the model of the Stoics, resembled more nearly that of Socrates, than the stern, unaccommodating precepts of Zeno; his greatest error seems to have been that of thinking too well of mankind; he considered the soul of every man to be an emanation from the Deity, and tho' sometimes capable of being debased by passion and vice, yet in its nature

essentially good ; this led him to suppose men better than they are, and not sufficiently to consider them the creatures of circumstances, but more under the power of virtuous principles than they have hitherto been found ; this opinion blinded him to the vices of his son and his wife, and prevented him from treating them as they deserved. No man was more fully sensible of the duties of a monarch than this pious emperor ; he regarded his power as a trust delegated to him by providence for the good of his people, and every action of his life and government seemed to result from this principle ; he was not only a teacher of morality, but a practical moralist ; he was on the whole rather a good, than a great man, for he wanted that firmness of conduct which enables a man to rule an empire, and shewed that it is almost impossible for kings to be philosophers, or philosophers to be kings, according to the refined sentiment of Plato. He was much fitter to instruct men than to command them ; for such is the weakness of human nature, that it is almost impossible that one man should excel in more than one art.

The long night of ignorance which succeeded the fall of the Roman empire in the West, hardly produced one moral writing which was

worthy to be transmitted to posterity ; the only guides of benighted reason, were school divinity and barbarous metaphysics,—a blaze of light now and then burst forth, which was soon overwhelmed by the darkness that surrounded, and till printing gave stability to the efforts of industry and genius, knowledge could not long keep its ground against ignorance.— A few men at different times arose, who with almost intuitive wisdom, formed just notions of the nature of virtue, and the moral relations of society ; among these the most distinguished was Alfred, the honor of the human race, who did more to civilize a rude people than any other single man at any period; he dispersed among the multitude such apalogues and fables as were to be found in the Saxon tongue, and translated the fables of *Æsop*— a proof that he considered morality of considerable importance. To him, after a long interval, followed the illustrious John of Salisbury, in the reign of Henry II. a man who having, in that comparatively dark period, cultivated his mind by the study of the Greek and Roman classics, had formed just notions on the nature of man, in his moral and social capacity, and has left in his writings some splendid proofs of the extent of his knowledge, and the pro-

priety of his sentiments, on various subjects of literature and morality. To him succeeded a gloom almost impenetrable, till the restoration of learning in Italy diffused a gentle gleam of light over the moral and political hemisphere. Petrarch, more renowned for his splendid poetry, than for his dull prose, threw a faint glimmer of his enlightened mind on the long neglected topic of morality ; and Poggio Bracoliini scattered through his writings many moral precepts, which, tho' neither new nor profound, were of general utility. The termination of the fifteenth century produced the first moral writer, who emancipating himself from scholastic and theological subtleties, professedly undertook to treat on morals as a separate branch of study ; this great man was Matteo Bosso, the principal of the monastery of Tiesole. Nearly cotemporary with him, was Pontanus, well known for his boasting monitory epitaph ; his treatise de Obedientia contains an excellent summary of moral duty, and his book de Principe should be read by all sovereigns who wish to understand the nature of their sacred office. The author treats of politics as a branch of morals, a light in which they are very seldom considered.

The philosophy of Montaigne was of the

gay and epicurean sort ; he loved pleasure and he loved life, yet his pleasure was not inconsistent with virtue ; nor did his love of life render him a prey to the fear of death, for no man took greater pains to reason himself out of that natural fear than Montaigne. The longest chapter in his book is upon that subject ; he has said a great deal upon it, but not more to the purpose than Plutarch in his *Consolatio ad Apollonium*. Montaigne and Charron were cotemporaries, and there is some resemblance in their writings where the latter copied the former. Montaigne thought and wrote like a philosopher, and Charron too often with the prejudices of a priest ; yet tho' he professed that contempt of worldly vanities peculiar to religious bigotry and unworthy of philosophical liberality, he was in many respects so superior to the groveling notions of his profession as to excite the spleen and resentment of his priestly brethren, who, because he did not adopt all the follies of their creed, called him heretic, infidel, and atheist. His morality is of the purest temper, yet his scholastic divisions, founded neither in reason nor in fact, perplex his subject, and render him tedious and dry. The first chapter of his book is worth many volumes ; it describes, with a profound know-

ledge of the human heart, the true causes of self-ignorance.—Montaigne gives us nothing but a heap of loose reflections without method or arrangement. Charron contains regular and systematic advice; he considers the senses as the origin of all our knowledge, v. cap. 12. and the immortality of the soul, tho' generally believed, to be very feebly proved, cap. 15. a position which gave great offence to religionists. His estimate of human life, tho' a little too deeply colored, is in general accurate and just, v. cap. 26. The 2d chapter of the 2d book, on liberty of mind and sentiment, contains a strong lesson against bigotry and prejudice. Chapter 4th is an admirable piece of moral advice. Chapter 5th, on religion, shews that however his mind was narrowed in some points by religious particularities, yet his general sentiments were free and noble, and his religion of no sect but that of God. It was this chapter which naturally raised him so many enemies, and cost him the persecution of sectarian bigots and fanatic priests. The second volume is a complete manual of moral and political wisdom, and the whole is a treasure of inestimable price.

The Essays of the great Lord Bacon are an epitome of wisdom, inasmuch as they contain

the reflections of a man who had thought more deeply and seen more of human affairs than most other men of any age or period, yet they are disfigured by the fault of the times in which he lived, by a certain affected quaintness and fondness for similes, which left nothing in nature without a resemblance; so that were the dross of these essays to be separated from the pure gold, they might be compressed into half their present size, and yet leave enough to form an admirable manual of practical advice.

La Bruyere has few general principles of morality; he paints individuals, not the species, nor their vices and virtues; there is a monotony in him which is always tedious, and sometimes disgusting: his characters are generally drawn from life, but he refines too much, like our philosophic historians, upon motives, and is too strongly tinctured with the misanthropic philosophy of Rochefoucault to be a pleasant companion, tho' he may sometimes be an useful one: he is most at home when he is painting the vices and follies of mankind, and seems to have little pleasure in their virtues. He resembles Moliere in his delicate touch of characters; but tho' he shews them by description, he perhaps could not have made them

describe themselves like Moliere; his expressions are equally strong and delicate, and there is a forcible conciseness in his manner, which comes home to the fancy and the feelings more suddenly than pages of labored disquisition. It is evident that he had studied Montaigne and Charron very deeply; he is indeed a great borrower. Theophrastus he professes to have been his master, and Accarias de Serrione, the French translator of Publius Syrus, has found many of his sentences to have been almost literally translated from that concise moralist.

La Bruyere, as a moral writer, has not the merit of giving general descriptions of vice and virtue, which are equally true at all times and in all nations; he drew the manners and the characters of his own times, and of them perhaps he has given a faithful copy; but his portraits resemble too much those pictures which, being dressed in the fashion of the times, lose much of their merit in a future age, and have nothing in them like nature but the complexion and features, which can hardly be disguised. His general reflections, however, apply to all times and seasons, and are admirable for their depth and solidity. The greatest fault of La Bruyere is one which per-

vades his whole book, and without which he perhaps could never have written ; the loose and unconnected nature of his reflections prevents him from ever being read for any length of time together ; we take him up and lay him down again after a few sentences, for it is impossible to keep up the attention of the mind, any more than the attention of the eye, to objects which are perpetually moving. La Bruyere however contains a valuable stock of materials which may be expanded and spread over a wider surface by future writers on the subject of morality.

The immortal pages of Addison next claim attention, and tho' they are now not so frequently in the hands of all ranks as they were forty years ago, yet they will never cease to be admired while the English language continues in any degree of purity : the simple elegance of his stile, and the delicacy of his humor, are however his principal claims to be admired, for his morality is merely common-place, and his religion is narrowed by the spirit of a sect ; it is not the religion of nature. There is no strength nor energy either in his thoughts or his language ; all is pure, equable, and elegant, but it is the simplicity of nature without any foreign ornament. The

great estimation in which Addison was formerly held, above what his writings entitle him to, is to be attributed to the time at which he wrote, and the nature of his compositions; before his time, reading was limited to a very small number, but the appearance of the Spectator, by its convenient and diurnal form, induced those to read who could hardly spell, and taught the belles and beaux of the time to seek for information blended with amusement. The Spectator was succeeded by a great number of such papers, which scattered morality among the multitude, and formed a new set of readers who aimed at being wise without pursuing the deep investigations of science, and acquiring a kind of every-day knowledge, which was cheaply obtained and widely extended. The merit of Addison in thus diffusing wisdom and amusement, which had formerly been locked up in ponderous folios, entitles him to a high rank among the improvers of mankind; but had he succeeded Johnson or Hawksworth it is probable his reputation would have been considerably less than it is, from the priority of his appearance; for certainly his merits as an instructive moralist are far inferior to these writers. Perhaps, however, it is well that he came before

them, for to induce a habit of reading, with men, as with children, it is requisite to begin with lighter compositions first, and then ascend to those which are more grave and solid. The mind, like the body in its infant state, must first be fed with light food till it can digest that which is more strong and heavy. The most that Addison did was to put the common topics of morality in an agreeable dress, to expand the concise sentences of Solomon, and Jesus the son of Sirach into a more diffuse manner, and enliven the dry stile of advice by the animating delineation of characters, and the recital of stories and allegories; in this he succeeded so far in inducing the generality of people to read, that his merits will never be forgotten by the moralist, and his beauties will ever be held in estimation by the man of taste; he has not instructed us so much by telling us what we are, as what we ought to be, and his characters are perhaps less true to nature than to the times in which he lived. Such men as Honeycomb and Will Wimble are now hardly to be found. His views of man are neither new nor extensive, yet as far as they go, they are bright and pleasing; it was not his wish, nor his temper to give a gloomy picture of life or morality; he is always cheerful, benevolent,

and entertaining ; and whoever wishes to pass through the world easily and quietly, in a moderate station, will do well to make Addison his companion as a moral instructor and religious guide.

The character of Johnson's writings has lately been criticised by no very candid examiner, and the general tendency of them been pronounced unfavorable to the progress of virtue. This seems to me a harsh and an unjust censure ; for tho' Johnson certainly saw the world through a gloomy medium, and has sometimes represented it in the same colors, yet the general spirit of his writings by no means tends to depress but rather to strengthen the mind, by recommending firmness and perseverance in struggling with the difficulties of life, and undaunted resolution in all great undertakings. No man who has not constantly lived in the most luxurious indulgence of every kind, will say that life is not filled with troubles, and perpetually affording matter of aversion and disgust to men of benevolent minds, who are anxious for their own happiness and that of others ; yet even the strongest statement of these miseries is not incompatible with vigor and energy of conduct ; nor is there, I trust, any man so wretched as not to have expe-

rienced at different periods of his life, some bright gleams of comfort and enjoyment. The fault of Johnson's writings is not that of inducing despondency and culpable apathy; for setting aside his religious prejudices, no man did more to strengthen and support the cause of virtue, and keep the world in subjection to the strongest moral principles. It cannot be said that he did much to extend the boundaries of knowledge, or to throw any new lights either on morality or metaphysics. He left the world pretty much as he found it, and for him it was certainly no worse; the age in which he lived was not an age of discovery; the maxim of the times was "*State super vias antiquas,*" to keep things as they were, rather than endeavor to improve. The greatest fault of Johnson's writings is the pomposity and inflation of his stile, which served to conceal from common readers the most common thoughts, and give an air of dignity to trifles; his conversation was indebted to the same pomposity for its imposing effect, and those whom he did not convince, he could always confound. If we divest the greatest part of his writings of their turgid language, he will be reduced to the level of every-day writers, because writing to him was a mere mechanical habit, which seldom

required much exertions of thought, or great depth of reflection ; but when he did descend into himself, and called forth the full strength of his powers; his energy will then be found to consist in his ideas, rather than his language. A few papers in the Rambler may be selected of this description—No 5, 22, 39, 48, 60, 80, 108, 114, 148. The reputation of Johnson has certainly been hitherto rated too high ; every attempt, therefore, to reduce it to its proper level must be considered as a service to the world, for nothing is more injurious to mankind than to form an undue estimate of the merits of those whom they consider as their guides and instructors, and when once they are deceived in this respect it is difficult to destroy the prejudice. Men of common minds seldom judge for themselves, but follow the opinion of the majority. To acquiesce in the sentiments of others is more convenient for indolence and ignorance, than to examine the grounds of their belief. Tho' this implicit reliance is to be lamented, it is hardly to be blamed, and considering that the generality of men are captivated by sound rather than by sense, it is not to be wondered that the literary reputation of Johnson stands so high, for the dominion he possessed was acquired

more by pompous phrases, than by accuracy of language or depth of thought: yet, with all his faults, no man will deny that his writings contain a fund of useful information for those who wish to be previously prepared for a knowledge of the world, and with proper cautions they may be read by all ranks and ages with infinite profit and delight.

A more amiable, and, in general, a more useful moralist, than Johnson, is to be found among the crowd of his imitators.—Dr Knox has acquired a well-deserved reputation for the earnestness and apparent sincerity of his manner, for the elegance of his stile, and the variety of his classical knowledge. His principles, where they are not narrowed by his religion, are manly, honest, and independent; they are dignified and spirited, without being surly, and tend to form the minds of young men to an admiration of every thing that is great and noble, and a contempt of every thing mean and dishonest. I hardly think it possible to name any periodical moralist whose writings may be read with greater advantage by young men, than the two volumes of Dr Knox's Essays; they breathe every thing that is classical, liberal, and spirited, and they will do more to form the rising generation to prin-

ciples of honesty and independence, than any other single performance which can be mentioned. I speak only of their morality, for their religion is that of sectarian bigotry.

The Grecian philosophers, whose writings have come down to us, all agreed about the end of virtue, tho' they differed about its nature, and there is not one of them whose life was either impure or dishonest; they all preserved their existence to extreme old age, and gave examples of patience and temperance, which were the best proofs of the merit of their doctrines. It is impossible to relate the endless and minute variety of their opinions on the nature of the sovereign good, yet it is sufficient to say, that they differed little on essentials, and all seemed to obtain that happiness which was the professed end of their search, a fact sufficient to convince us, that provided the means we employ are virtuous, it matters not in what our supreme good consists, and that we ought to be liberal and indulgent to others for slight differences, when we are certain that their actions tend to the same good purpose. The generality of these philosophers blended metaphysical enquiry with practical advice, thus endeavoring, at the same time, to gratify the curiosity

and improve the morals of their readers and hearers, to elevate them above mere sensual pursuits, and advance them in learning, virtue, and every true enjoyment.

The metaphysical divinity of Plato demands no share of my attention in the enquiry I have proposed; I respect the purity of his life, and admire the sublimity of his imagination, but I regard his doctrines among the number of those splendid fictions, which have seduced the reason of mankind, without increasing their virtue; for I find the morality of Socrates, who affirmed nothing, and of Epicurus, who denied every thing which concerned these metaphysical reveries, equally pure and useful with that of Plato, who held the most unintelligible doctrines on the nature of the soul and the divinity.—Plato has contributed more than any other ancient writer to deceive mankind, as to their own and the divine nature; from him we derive many of our ridiculous notions of spirits and of angels. He was a man of lively imagination, and had his mind been turned to poetry rather than philosophy, he might have amused and improved the world without deluding it; there are, however, many passages in his writings, particularly in his Timœus, where he seems to have been un-

able to separate the idea of a God, from that of the universe, and it was the same with most of the other Grecian philosophers, as may be seen both in their own works and in Cicero de Natura Deorum. Plato was not content to deduce our capacity for virtue, from the acknowledged and visible powers of man, he looked for a higher source, and fancied he found it in considering the soul as an emanation of the divinity, which, being endowed with all imaginable excellence, imparted a portion of that excellence to its derivatives. Virtue, therefore, according to him, was not to be tried by the standard of utility, but by a standard of imaginary excellence which existed in the mind antecedent to its connexion with the body, and had existed from all eternity in the mind of the Deity. The conception is sublime, but the deduction is not susceptible of proof; it may be sufficient to convince a Platonist, whose imagination is fascinated by the alluring idea of a species of moral beauty independent of human actions, existing in the grand prototype of excellence, but let him remember, that all this magnificent parade of virtue depends only on idea, and that tho' the test of utility is derived from a humbler origin, it is capable of positive demonstration, and affords a motive adapted to

every rank of society. The divine origin, and consequent immortality of the soul, was the source of Plato's morality, yet it differed not in many respects from that of others, who looked not to so exalted a motive. Plato considered the end of virtue to consist in acquiring a resemblance to the Deity, and that vice was a debasement of our divine original; that the means of virtue were to be found in our corporeal endowments, in health, strength, and the exercise of the sensual faculties, and in the external advantages of riches, power, and family, yet that without these, a virtuous man might be happy. He maintained that no man should refuse the public offices of the state, except when he saw that the people were so lost in corruption as to be incapable of amendment; that every man should marry, and that he should adhere strictly to the laws which are established, but if he thought them pernicious, he should strive to have them improved. Virtue, he defined to be that which is laudable, reasonable, useful, decorous, and consistent, agreeable to nature and propriety, and capable of being proved. He distinctly separated the goods of the mind from those of the body; the former he called justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance; the lat-

ter health, strength, and beauty. Friends, riches, and the happiness of our country, he considered as extrinsic to either; friendship, he held to be of three sorts, viz. natural, social, and hospitable; the first was that between relations, the next between strangers, and the last, that which arose from the letters or recommendations of our friends to foreign countries. Politics he treated as a more extensive morality, and has left some valuable political treatises, which are worth the attention of all who wish to consider that subject in its genuine purity. He divided laws into written and unwritten—a division which all legal writers have since adopted. Beneficence he considered as fourfold, which may be imparted; by money, by personal aid, by knowledge, and by words. Happiness he divided into five kinds, that which arises from wisdom, health, success, fame and power, riches and comfort. The soul, according to Plato, resembled a republic, governed by three different powers; the first, or supreme, was reason, or that power which judges and directs the exercise of the others; the next are, the passions and affections, which are of two sorts—the irascible, and the concupiscent; the former of these are solely in the mind, the latter are connected

with the body; from the due government of these by the reason, arise the four cardinal virtues, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Power he divided into five sorts, legislative, natural, customary, elective, and violent. He divided the goods of life into three sorts, viz. those which we possess alone, and those which can be participated, and those which can subsist by themselves. Counsel he defines to be of three kinds, which relate to the past, to the future, and the present. The morality of Plato has many claims to our regard, superior to those of any other sage of antiquity, for tho' mixed with his metaphysics, it is plain, distinct, and intelligible. He places virtue not in any single quality, but in a union of many, and depending upon various powers; his theology endeared him to the fathers of the church, tho' they pretend it is his morality they admire; the softness of his manners, the elegance of his language, and the variety of his knowledge, contributed, during his lifetime, to gain him many disciples, and tho' his divinity and his metaphysics could be admired only because they are unintelligible,*

* Gibbon iii. 323.

yet his morality, which he derived chiefly from Socrates, was level to the meanest capacity, and was calculated for the noblest purposes, to elevate, refine, and purify our nature, to keep the passions within their due limit, without destroying them, like the Stoics, or giving them too great a sway, like the pretended Epicureans. To this it is probably owing that the sect of Platonic philosophers has continued so long in the world, and is not even yet extinct, tho' few in number.

The morality of Aristotle is more independent of his metaphysics than that of Plato, yet there is a precision, a neatness, and a conciseness in his manner of expressing himself in all his writings, which, tho' it shews the regularity and profundity of his mind, is apt to be obscure to those who have not been accustomed to the same closeness and accuracy of reasoning.—Tho' he has none of the extravagancies of Plato, yet he has subtleties of his own which are sometimes equally unintelligible. If Plato errs from the exuberance of his imagination, the fault of Aristotle is in the excess of his reason; if Plato wanted judgment, Aristotle wanted fire, and nothing can be more opposite than their manner of conveying their instruction,—the one seeks for, and employs, all the

graces and ornaments of stile ; the other only delights in the dry subtleties of argument ; the one dazzles by his brilliancy, the other confounds by an excessive arrangement. The splendid paradoxes of Plato are not more perplexing to the mind than the tedious divisions and subdivisions of Aristotle. The one for ever labors to shine, the other wearies himself and his readers in striving to convince ; they are neither of them adapted to common students, and therefore neither of them calculated for general utility. The morality of Aristotle resembled in many respects that of his master Plato, and he has left behind him more aphorisms, which arises from his sententious manner of conveying his sentiments. "The root of science," he said, "is bitter, but the fruit is sweet." "There is the same difference," said he, "between an ignorant and a learned man, as between a living body and a dead carcase." "Friendship, he called, one soul in two bodies." Men must either be much altered since the time of Aristotle, or he must have formed romantic notions of friendship, for according to his definition of it, I doubt whether any such thing exists. Long acquaintance is often called friendship, and so is familiarity, but they are very different things. Let us look

thro' the world and see if any man will sacrifice his own comfort and convenience to that of his friend. People may shake hands and be very glad to see each other, and shew a number of little kindnesses that cost nothing, but that is not friendship. There may be such a thing as friendshp, but I have never found it, tho' I have sought it at the expence of many sacrifices. "Nothing is so soon forgotten as kindness."— "Hope is a waking dream." "Let us be friends of Socrates, friends of Plato, but most the friends of truth." "Polite literature is the greatest ornament of prosperity, and the best consolation in adversity." "Philosophy teaches us to do that voluntarily which other men do by constraint." "All virtue is placed in the medium." Being asked what a man gained by telling a lie, he answered, "Not to be believed when he tells the truth." "A good person," he said, "was better than a letter of recommendation." "Parents who gave their children a good education," he said, "deserved to be honored much more than those who merely begot them; for the one only gave them life, while the other gave them the means of living."—To a man who boasted of belonging to an illustrious city, he said, "Consider first whether you are worthy of it."—Being asked

how we ought to behave ourselves towards our friends, he answered, "In the same manner we expect them to behave to us." "He who has many friends has none." Being reproached with having given money to a man who did not deserve it, he answered, "I did not give it to the man, but to humanity." These maxims alone, which were delivered to his disciples, and are recorded by Diogenes Laertius, are sufficient to immortalize him, and outweigh all his metaphysical subtleties, and all the splendid reveries of Plato. It was the object of Phyrrho to free the mind from all perturbation by subduing the passions, and disengaging the reason from all metaphysical discussions, and therefore he attempted to prove that nothing could be proved, and he has gone very far to do so. The work of Sextus Empiricus, which contains his opinion, deserves to be read by every man addicted to the study of philosophy.

His system of morality remains now to be considered. He did not extend his notions of virtue to the extravagant pitch of the Stoics, nor even of Plato. He considered the senses to be the criterion of truth in external things, and the mind in things relating to moral, and the end of all our energies to be the practice of virtue in a well spent life; by this single axiom

he opened the road to a practical system of philosophy, which has effected a complete revolution in metaphysics and moral science.—Happiness he held to be composed of three things, viz. those of the mind, those of the body, and the goods of fortune; for virtue alone, he said, could not constitute happiness, when so many other things are requisite; let a man be never so wise he cannot be happy if he is in distress and poverty. How opposite is this to the doctrine of the Stoics! and yet the truth of each must depend on such a variety of circumstances as to render it impossible to lay down any general principle.—He divided the life of man into two kinds, active and contemplative, and was blameable for giving too great preference to the former. Vice he maintained to be sufficient to create misery, tho' surrounded with all worldly enjoyment. He was of opinion that the virtues did not follow each other naturally, for a man might be prudent and just, and yet weak and intemperate. A virtuous man, he said, was not free from all perturbations, but from the most violent. Virtue he defined not to consist so much in just notions as in habits, which required a great length of time and much industry to form, and with regard to

himself, no man was more indefatigable ; he afforded a striking example against the dangerous custom of being content with superficial notions on any subject, for he studied every thing deeply. To detail all his opinions on the nature of morality, is by no means requisite ; from what has been said, a general idea of his system may be formed. Of all the ancient philosophers, perhaps none is more talked of and less known than Pyrrho. He is considered as the father of scepticism, and scepticism with some people is a name for every thing that is wicked and bad, and yet a better man than Pyrrho hardly ever lived.—v. p. 230.

The character and philosophy of Epicurus have been more grossly misunderstood than those of any of his cotemporaries ; he was calumniated in his life-time by those who envied his fame, and after his death by those who mistook his principles; yet there is hardly one among them whose conduct was more rational, or his morality more pure and simple.

A few words may be said of his life as illustrative of his doctrines. He began the study of philosophy in his fourteenth year, and adopted the notions of Democritus, from a sudden dissatisfaction at the ignorance of a grammarian ; having asked him what the chaos of

Hesiod meant, he answered, that he could not tell,—and immediately the inquisitive youth sought for information from better sources, and began to read the books of Democritus, who taught that the origin of all things was from the fortuitous concourse of atoms, and that nothing else with certainty could be affirmed ; that all things were produced and conducted by necessity, and that the enjoyment of human life consisted in a right and quiet state of mind, which, tho' not positively pleasure, was a state in which the mind is happy by its calmness and tranquillity, and the freedom from fear, from superstition, and every other perturbation. Having travelled into different countries to acquire knowledge, he fixed after all at Athens, and in his two and thirtieth year, opened a school of philosophy, which was soon thronged with scholars, and never after empty; such was the soothing gentleness and affability of his manners, the attractive nature of his doctrines, and the easy familiarity which prevailed through the whole society. He reproved the practice of Pythagoras in exacting from his friends a community of goods, as seeming to shew a distrust of their attachment. He used no pomp nor artifice in delivering his doctrines, there was no ostentatious display of

wisdom or power, but the utmost sincerity and simplicity prevailed in all he said, did, and thought. His school was in the midst of a large and beautiful garden, enriched by nature, and adorned by art. He spent a long life in the most tranquil serenity and enjoyment, except when interrupted by violent attacks of the stone, which at length, by a stoppage in his bladder, put a period to his existence in the seventy-third year of his age, after suffering fourteen days of exquisite agony ; his last words were an exhortation to his disciples to be mindful of his precepts. His followers were numerous, and so were his writings, for he is said to have left behind him three hundred rolls, or volumes, of which all that have been preserved are, his will, and a few of his letters, the last of which contain some of his physics, his astronomy, and his morals ; with the two first I have little concern, the last I intend to abridge, and also his maxims selected from his other writings, by Diogenes Laertius. I will then compare his morality with that of other philosophers, and leave my readers to determine on his merits, and how far he deserves all the obloquy that has been thrown on him. His letter to Manæceas is to the following purport :—

“ Let no man neglect to seek after wisdom in his youth, nor be tired of it when he is old ; whoever says that the time for it is either past or not come, must say, that the time to be happy is either past or not arrived ; we ought then at all times to study our happiness, for having this, we have all things. All that I have continually advised you, practice and think upon, viz. That a god is a being incorruptible and happy : think of him as such, and no otherwise ; for there are gods, and the proof of their existence is evident, but they are not such as men figure them, neither is he impious who denies their being, but he who thinks of them unworthily.”

Having elsewhere maintained, that the gods being by their exalted nature, removed from all concern or interference in the affairs of the world, it naturally followed, that he did not think they required our worship, or communicated their will by divination or oracular response. “ I advise you,” says he, “ to consider death as a matter of no concern to us, for all good and evil is in our perceptions, and death is the extinction of all feeling and perception ; to despise death is to enjoy life, and instead of adding eternity to it, we ought to take away the desire of immortality, for no-

thing in life can be terrible to him who believes that there is nothing terrible in ceasing to exist. He is a fool, then, who dreads death, not as a present, but as a future evil; and this most frightful of all calamities is in truth nothing, for where we are, death is not, and where death is, we are not; he is neither with the dead nor the living, and is therefore—nothing. While some men fly from death as the greatest of evils, others seek for him as a release from their sorrows; but a philosopher neither dreads to part with life, for he knows he has not the power of living, nor does he think death to be an evil, and measures life not by its length, but by its enjoyment. We must remember that our wants are partly natural and partly artificial, and of the natural some are indispeusible, as those relating to the welfare of the body, and the tranquillity of the mind, which are the principal means of living happily; for the great rule of life is to avoid pain and procure pleasure, and all good or evil is to be measured by this standard.—We should look upon content as the greatest good on earth, not that it is requisite we should have only a little to live upon, but when we *have* only a little, we should be satisfied, for this reason, that they best enjoy abundance

who are content with least, and simple fare can give a relish equal to the greatest luxuries, when the pains of poverty are removed ; for bread and water are luxury to him who is in positive want ; to accustom ourselves, therefore, to simple food, is the sure means of health, and renders us equal to all the active duties of life, better prepared also for sumptuous entertainments when they come, and fearless of the frowns of fortune. When we say, then, that pleasure is the end of life, we do not mean the pleasures of debauchery, or those which consist in gross enjoyment, as some have ignorantly, or intentionally, or maliciously, misinterpreted our meaning ; for it is not feasts and revellings, nor the other pleasures of the senses, which make life pleasant and desirable, but the sober exertions of reason which enquires into the nature of things to be desired or avoided, and banishes error and doubt. Prudence is the first of virtues, for no man can live happily who does not live prudently, honorably, and justly, and the reverse is equally true. The virtues are naturally allied to happiness, and happiness to virtue, for who can be superior to him who thinks justly of the gods, who has no terrors of death, and conceives it to be the termination

of his existence ? who thinks that the goods of this life are easy to be procured, and the evils of short duration, that necessity is accountable to no one, and that fortune is fickle and unsteady? Meditate on these things day and night, by yourself, and with your friends, and you will never be disturbed, not even in a dream. You will enjoy perpetual tranquillity, and live like a god among men. For a man who is perpetually conversant with the blessings which reason can bestow, seems to be superior to the rest of mankind."

The most remarkable of his maxims which are not contained in the foregoing letter are as follow :—" A philosopher, by the exertion of his reason, may overcome all the injuries of mankind, whether arising from hatred, envy, or contempt ; he will never trouble himself with public affairs, he will take care never to be reduced to poverty, nor ever be unmindful of the future ; he will love to live in the country, he will resist the attacks of fortune, and he will always be so careful of reputation as to avoid being despised." He denied that all offences were equal, and said that bravery was not natural, but the effect of reason. He said that friendship was earnestly to be sought for, and consisted in a similarity of pleasures ; that

happiness was of two sorts, that of the gods, which admits of no diminution nor increase, and that of men, which consisted in the number and degree of our pleasures; that a philosopher will not be disturbed if another is thought wiser than himself; and that such a man ought even to die for a friend;* that virtue was to be sought after, not for itself, but for the pleasures it bestowed; that the desires of nature are easily defined, and easily satisfied, while those of vanity are infinite; that a philosopher is not in the power of fortune; that the pleasures of sense after the removal of hunger are not increased, but varied, and that no evil that man can suffer is either eternal or of long continuance. Diodorus the Sicilian tells us that he published a book called General Maxims, in which he says, That a life spent according to the principles of justice must be free from perturbation, an opinion which the historian highly extols, and thinks sufficient to preserve the peace of the world, for “injustice” says he, “is the metropolis of evils, and causes the greatest calamity, not only to individuals but to kings and nations.”—Diod. Sic. l. 25, c. i.

* Vide Cicer. de Div. 103. defin. 1. Athen. lib. 12. f. 545.

The long calumniated philosophy of Epicurus has here been fairly represented from the most authentic memorial which antiquity hath left us--his life by Diogenes Laertius, and it now remains to examine what are its merits, and what are its faults. The greatest praise which it deserves, is that of plainness and practical utility. It contains no refined and useless speculations on the nature of virtue or the duties of man; no romantic notions of happiness, incompatible with the present state of our existence, or the enjoyment of the goods of nature: Our senses are declared to be the inlets to happiness and knowledge, and pleasure the end of our existence. Such doctrines, tho' they may not accord with the high-flown Platonic notions of the soul, as a separate essence, nor with the Stoical reveries on the beauty of virtue and the contempt of pain, are proved by practical experience to be conformable to the actual state of things. Let any man enquire of himself, whether he has certainty of any thing that is not conveyed to him by his senses, and whether the desire of obtaining pleasure, and avoiding pain, is not the first motive of all his actions; it is only requisite, in order to fix his happiness on a solid basis, that his pleasures should be pure, rational, and moderate, and

then who will say, that virtue itself is not sought for on account of the internal satisfaction it is capable of producing. Such philosophy is supported by facts, which are the strongest of all evidence, for every thing else rests only on uncertain speculation and vain conjecture.

Having laid down these two principles, that the senses are the only means of knowledge, that pleasure is our greatest good, and pain our greatest evil, the life which follows must be conformable to reason, and productive of happiness, consisting in the enjoyments of sense, regulated by the control of prudence; in the full exercise of our rational faculties, so as to keep our minds free from doubt and error, from vain fancies and groundless terrors, from unworthy notions of ourselves or others, and to qualify us for the enjoyment of social intercourse in its highest state of refinement, enlivened by wit and humor, and endeared by the confidence of virtuous friendship. Our happiness also must result from the exercise of our minds and fortunes to promote the good of others, in extending their comforts; enlightening their understanding, and relieving their misery. The man who lives according to these principles, tho' he may now

and then be disturbed by the intervention of physical evil, cannot be rendered miserable either by the frowns of fortune or the severity of pain; and it must also be remarked, that misfortune is frequently only another name for imprudence, and that it is much easier to prevent bodily pain, by the constant control of our irregular appetites and passions, than to relieve it by all the efforts of medicine and surgery. A life spent in conformity to the exertions of unclouded reason, is all that mortals can pretend to, for immortality is as little in our power as existence was before our birth; and a due mixture of sensual and rational enjoyment seems to be most suited to our mixed nature. The faults of this philosophy (for no system is without faults), are few compared to those of others, and they arise rather from the state of the world, than from any vice inherent in the system. It is said, and with great truth, that the philosophy of Epicurus is of too refined a nature for the commerce of the world, because it withdraws men too much from any interference in public affairs, and tends too much to what may be called a life of indolence. It may also be justly reproached with being practicable only by the rich and middle ranks of life, to the total exclusion of the poor,

for it supposes a certain degree of affluence in its professors, and takes very little notice of the passive virtues of patience and self-denial. The philosophy of Epicurus is a philosophy for a gentleman, but not for a mechanic or a peasant; for tho' temperance and frugality are every where recommended, I doubt whether an Epicurean is well suited to struggle with want and poverty; it may be of great use in regulating the conduct, and purifying the pleasures of the rich and prosperous, but it is not a philosophy for the unfortunate. Many other faults of lesser importance have been imputed to the Epicurean system, but most of these have arisen either from a mistake of the words or the sense; of the latter, the most material are two maxims which are said to give room for a considerable extent of iniquity. In the first, he is supposed to say, that "Power, however obtained, is lawful, on account of the violence of men to each other;" and this axiom is believed to sanction every species of usurpation or illegitimate authority. I do not by any means understand this to be the sense of the passage; if the axiom had stood simply by itself, there could have been no doubt of its immoral tendency, but for the reason given, viz. the violence of men, I suppose he

must have meant, that any government is better than none. The other maxim which has given offence is this, “ That no pleasure in itself is criminal; but the efficient part of many pleasures causes more pain than gratification.”—Here again he has saved himself by giving a reason, for as he said before, that virtue is not to be admired for itself, but for the pleasure it produces, so vice is not detestable but for its bad consequences; and this is in fact the truth, if we were able to divest ourselves of the effects of habit and prejudice. We detest vice on account of its ill effects, and therefore we connect with it an idea of deformity. It is well that we should do so, it is a prejudice from which no ill can arise, but when we speak of facts, we must allow that all actions are indifferent to those who are unacquainted with their consequences, and so far Epicurus is not to be condemned; he has taken a view of things in their naked state, and it is right that they should now and then be seen undressed.

Another fault imputed to him, is that of affirming, that “ freedom from pain is the greatest pleasure.” This opinion may more properly be called a mistake, and seems to have arisen from the violent nature of the disease to which he was subject; for tho’ a

freedom from pain is a delightful sensation, yet it is only comparative, and is by no means to be called positive pleasure, which arises from motion, as the other does from rest. A fault of much deeper hue is chargeable to the Epicurean philosophy, which is that of despising the liberal arts and the study of polite literature, and placing happiness too much in repose.

To make a candid estimate of the merits of this philosophy, compared with the maxims and systems of other moralists, it may be said, that tho' not so comprehensive in the detail of its precepts, nor so useful for common life, as the morality of Confucius, or the Bible, nor so sublimely pure as that of Jesus Christ, it is less incumbered with extraneous doctrines than either, and more practicable in general than that of the founder of Christianity. It is more rational, and better adapted to the state and temper of man (a being composed of various capabilities), than the narrow system of the Stoics, and more benevolent, more liberal, and more generous than the selfish system of Rochefoucault; the one is calculated to improve, and render our nature more amiable; the other, to debase and degrade it, by inducing the belief, that all our virtues are fictitious,

and that every man is the enemy of another.—The best illustration of the merit of Epicurean principles, is the character of Atticus, one of the most accomplished men of antiquity. Dr Knox, in the first volume of his Essays, has defended him against the attacks of a French critic, and done justice to his worth. The odium which has been so long attached to the philosophy of Epicurus, so that in modern times an Epicure or Epicurean is only another name for a gross voluptuary, has arisen from a variety of sources, which it may be useful to point out, in order to shew that they are the result of envy, mistake, and prejudice. The first and greatest enemies of the Epicureans were the Stoics, principally because their doctrines were diametrically opposite to each other, and next, because they both set out in the world about the same time, and the Epicureans were the more popular of the two; these were no doubt powerful stimulants to enmity and calumny. The accusations brought against Epicurus by this irritated sect, extended not only to his doctrines, but to his connections and character, and they seem to have been so successfully propagated, that even a short time after his death, those who knew him only by name conceived him to have been

a voluptuous debauchee, rather than a temperate philosopher. The grammarians and the comic poets* were his next defamers; the enmity of the former may be accounted for from the contempt he entertained of their studies, and the reproof which he is early in life said to have given to one of them (his preceptor), for his ignorance; but their reproaches extended only to his stile, and his neglect of what they termed the arts of composition and the circle of sciences. The charges of the other were more weighty, for the Stoicks accused him of writing books which he never wrote, and uttering sentiments which he never uttered; there is hardly any species of intemperance, meanness, and debauchery, which they have not laid to his charge; they have indeed so overdone the matter, that they excite a suspicion of their veracity by the excess of their violence. Cicero was the first who ventured to do him justice, and tho' in some places where he differed from him he has mistaken his meaning, yet on the whole he has spoken of him with that candor and modera-

* The philosophers in general were a subject of ridicule to the comic writers, for Zeno was ridiculed by Philemon on account of his temperance and parsimony.

tion for which the new academy were always distinguished. A short time after the death of Cicero, the school of Epicurus began to be corrupted, and the vices which had been unjustly imputed to the leader became true of the sect. Torquatus and Atticus, the friends of Cicero, that many others, at that time, retained the doctrines and followed the example of their great master in full purity, but along with the general depravation of the empire, the Epicureans also became depraved, and misinterpreting the sense of the word pleasure, gave themselves up to every species of sensual and selfish enjoyment. Others, however, have imputed its destruction in part to the doctrines of the degenerate Epicureans, but the cause was too insignificant for the effect, and it is natural to suppose that they rather received than communicated the impulse of the times.— From that period, however, the sect fell into disrepute, and on account of their destructive principles were expelled from Rome and several other nations. Thus have I attempted to do justice to the memory of Epicurus, and to exonerate his philosophy from the charge of licentiousness. If I have succeeded with the liberal part of mankind, I have gained my

purpose, for the illiberal are not to be convinced.

Taking advantage of the general depravity of the sect, Plutarch revived the old calumnies against their founder, but soon after him Diogenes Laertius published his Lives of the philosophers, and redeemed the character of Epicurus from the odium under which it had suffered. A short time after him Athenæus, a grammarian, a weak man, and a bad writer, published a collection of scraps from all kinds of authors, and remembering the old grudge of his brethren against Epicurus, omitted not to heap on him every species of contumely, collected chiefly from the comic writers, to which he added a plentiful stock of his own vulgar ribaldry. It seems to have been one great object of Athenæus to calumniate the Grecian philosophers.

At the commencement of the 17th century, the philosophy and character of Epicurus found an able defender in the learned Gassendi.—The principles he adopted and improved, were embraced by a set of men who united heroism to delicacy of sentiment, and philosophy to the love of pleasure.—St Evremont brought these principles into England, and they are not yet

extinct.* The philosophy of Epicurus may now be dismissed and committed to the candid examination of those who, out of many different systems and opinions, are desirous to select for themselves, according to the best of their judgment, a rule of life, plain, practicable, and efficient.

The morality of Zeno next requires our consideration, and having long contributed to preserve the peace of mankind, tho' now almost forgotten, it deserves to be treated with the respect due to the memory of a departed friend from whom we have derived both pleasure and advantage. It is worthy also of impartial examination, as having for a great length of time mantained its influence in the world, and been the familiar guide and companion not only of philosophers, but of kings, princes, and potentates, and of the better sort of mankind in different regions of the globe. The founder of the sect of Stoicks was remarkable for the ugliness of his person, for the severity of his manners, and the integrity of his life; he enjoyed the esteem and confidence of his fellow-citizens, but tho' his followers were nu-

* The amiable James Harris, of Salisbury, has spoken favorably of the man, tho' he detested his doctrine, v. *Philological Enquiries*, p. 262.

merous, they were not equal to those of Epicurus, whose manners and philosophy were in every respect more attractive. To the credit of his philosophy, it deserves to be told, that by a life of extreme temperance, and with a very feeble constitution, he preserved his existence in tolerable health till the extreme age of ninety-eight: and during that period had the satisfaction of seeing his doctrines embraced by men of high rank and station, and his school flourish in numbers as well as respectability, at the time of his death. The first principle which he held to be implanted in every animal at its birth was self-preservation, derived from the consciousness of existence, but this he denied to be connected with pleasure; it is, however, notwithstanding his aversion to the Epicureans, the very same principle which they call the love of pleasure, and the aversion to pain, for it is that which tends to our preservation and welfare. To live agreeably to nature he affirmed to be the end of man's creation, that is to say, according to reason, or virtue, or utility; for when things produce a useful effect it is to be supposed they answer the purpose for which they were intended. He denied pleasure to be a good, for all pleasures, he said, had something base

in their nature, and nothing base could be good. Here he differs from Epicurus only in his ideas of virtue; for Zeno entertained too refined notions of it, as if it was to be admired for itself alone, and Epicurus loved it only for the pleasure or utility it produced. To do good, he maintained, was to act according to virtue, to do evil according to vice. Among things indifferent he numbered riches, health, glory, &c. for he held it possible to be happy without any of these, because their being good or evil for us depended on their use. He was the first who defined duty to be the *καθηκον*, or that which appertains to every one, and for which a good reason can be given why it should be performed. Every perturbation of mind he considered as irrational, unnatural, and arising from an excessive impulse. The true Stoic, he affirmed, was free from all these irregular affections, because he was in all things faultless; he was to be severe, because he should neither speak, nor hear others speak for mere gratification; sincere, because he ought never to appear what he is not; inaccessible to grief, because grief is an irrational contraction of the mind; approaching to divine, because he contains as it were a god within himself; pious and religious, and well versed in the divine laws; affectionate

to his children and to all his family, and benevolent to all mankind, considering himself a part of the universe, and therefore by nature intended to contribute his share to the good of the whole ; he alone is free, for the wicked are slaves ; he alone is a king, for the mind is an empire subject to no one ; blameless, because he cannot sin, and innocent, because he cannot hurt others, nor others him ; implacable to vice, because he ought neither to yield to affection nor entreaty, nor remit the punishment appointed by the law. He will wonder at none of those things which commonly excite the admiration of mankind ; he can never be alone, for he is always conversing with nature ; he can have no friendship but with the virtuous, for friendship consists only in a similarity of ideas ; he has every thing in his power, because he only knows the proper use of every thing.

The Stoics doubted among themselves whether virtue, when once acquired, could ever be lost, and they disputed the point with a degree of subtlety and refinement unworthy of true wisdom. With regard to the true and genuine Stoic, Zeno affirmed that the liberal arts were of the highest use to him, and that when his country or his friends required it, or when he could no longer be of any service to

the world, he might be allowed to depart ; he maintained also that there ought to be a community of wives as the surest means of making men love the children of each other, and removing the temptations to adultery.

The Stoics also maintained that virtue was to be sought for on its own account, and defined it by the name of fitness, to which every thing honest and proper was to be referred.— They despised bodily pain and pleasure, affirming that the one was no evil and the other no good. These are the principal moral doctrines of the Stoics, contained in Diogenes Laertius's Life of Zeno, and Cicero's 3d book of *De Finibus*, comprehend the opinions of their founder. It is foreign to my purpose to discuss or explain the metaphysical subtleties and imaginary distinctions either of him or his followers, or to set forth all the morality of the latter ; whoever wishes for that sort of information which profiteth little to any man, may find it displayed at large in many books which I do not profess to have done more than looked into, finding the matter they contained so repulsive as to merit no portion of time which could be better employed. I leave it to those to study fine spun theories, who have a perverse taste for such unprofitable nonsense, and

betake myself to that which may be reduced to practical utility.

The excellent advice contained in the morals of Epictetus, the epistles of Seneca, and the meditations of Antoninus, entitles them to the perusal of every man who is desirous to advance in virtue while he advances in age. To these excellent treatises I refer my readers for the best practical precepts (allowing for some of the nonsense of the sect), which the whole circle of moral philosophy contains; and whoever can read these authors without feeling his virtue strengthened and his mind extended, is past the reach of instruction or the hopes of improvement. Tho' the professed object of the Stoic philosophy was to exalt our nature, it has, by aiming at too much, in some respects degraded it; for he who is insensible to those feelings which are common to the rest of mankind, can have no point of sympathy with them, and therefore becomes less than others, rather than greater. Stoical apathy, like Christian submission, is so contrary to our nature, that it rather excites our pity than our admiration, for he who cannot feel for others, must not expect that they should feel for him. In all but the single point of aiming at too much, the Stoical morality deserves our ap-

probation, and even here it may be useful as an incentive to greater exertions than we should otherwise attempt ; it is not, however, like the morality of Confucius, or the Old Testament, plain, sententious, and adapted to all capacities ; it has too much of the pride and pomp of philosophy, and resembles too nearly the austere discipline of Pythagoras to be of use to the multitude ; it depends too much on metaphysical reasoning to be of great practical utility ; for tho' it is requisite that every man should form just notions of duty, and act from settled habits of reflection, it is not to be desired that he should stop to deliberate in every action of his life, as to the quantity of good it is likely to produce to the universe, or to balance with minute accuracy the difference between things of apparent similarity. There is, however, something great in the idea of exalting the mind above the evils of nature and the events of fortune, and placing her empire in a region beyond the reach of physical calamity, and the many great examples of moral purity which Stoicism has produced, are testimonies to the merit of her principles ; yet the virtues of humble life, which attract little notice and excite little applause, seem to be placed be-

neath her regard ; the quiet struggles of neglected poverty are triumphs too small for her ambition, but a great man wrestling with misfortune, she has pronounced to be an object which the gods themselves may look at with wonder. The grandeur of Cato attempting to support the falling liberties of Rome, and at length perishing in the ruins is an illustrious victory for the Stoical philosophy, because it affords a spectacle to the universe; but the silent efforts of modest merit contending with adversity, will make no figure in the pages of a Stoic philosopher, and hardly seem to deserve his notice ; whatever is great or noble excites his attention, but private worth is too small an object for his praise.

The philosophy of Zeno was calculated to make great men, but the virtues which it enjoins are almost above the reach of common ones, and are therefore not of general utility. She is too lofty to point out to mankind the detail of duties which are calculated for private life ; she draws a great outline which is left for the practitioner himself to fill up ; but there is hardly a station or event in life for which the morality of Confucius, the Bible, Socrates, Jesus Christ, and Plutarch, does not furnish some appropriate advice. To be

a Stoic requires a more than common capacity; first, to comprehend the great principles of the philosophy, and the causes from which they are deduced; and, next, to apply them to circumstances as they occasionally arise. To understand any of the moralists above mentioned requires little more than common sense, and a moderate education; for every duty of life is there described in characters so legible as not to be misunderstood. The philosophy of Zeno is intended only for philosophers, the morality of the others is adapted to every rank in society. By those however who are raised above the common events of life, and placed in conspicuous situations, the Stoical philosophy may be studied with considerable advantage to themselves and the public; it will furnish them with great and lofty motives to virtue; it will raise them above every thing mean and sordid; it will purify them from the grossness of avarice and self interest, and among such persons it has already produced illustrious examples of virtue, who, rising superior to vulgar temptations, have gained a place among the greatest benefactors of mankind. The philosophy of Zeno seemed to glory too much in adversity, and to court persecution as a means of being noticed. It is

true, that temptation is the touch-stone of the mind, and that he who never contends for the prize, can never deserve the praise of victory, but there is no need to seek for danger and difficulty: if they come in our way while in pursuit of other objects, they will then afford sufficient exercise for our fortitude.

The grand idea of acting a conspicuous part in the drama of the universe, and meriting the approbation of its Great Ruler, is a persuasion which cannot fail to inspire exalted sentiments, and give a degree of sublime purity to the whole of a man's motives and actions superior to any petty suggestions of worldly ambition or sordid interest; and in an age of base degeneracy, when all the greater springs of conduct seem to have lost their force, and virtue is considered as no more than an empty name, it could not fail to be productive of considerable advantage to the world should a set of men arise; inspired with the genuine ardor of Stoical morality, to conduct the affairs of the world on a grand and elevated principle; such hopes, however, might justly be deemed visionary in times like the present.

On a candid comparison between the philosophy of Epicurus and that of Zeno, it may be

said that the one gave too much to the body, and the other to the mind ; the one tended to make men indolent, the other urged them to exertions beyond the power of nature ; the one placed virtue too much in pleasure, the other placed pleasure too much in virtue ; for there is no doubt that the due mixture of each is requisite to our felicity ; tho' both acknowledged the existence of bodily pain, the one foolishly considered it to be the greatest of evils, the other more foolishly denied it to be an evil at all ; they both, however, acknowledged the supremacy of virtue, tho' they differed as to her nature.

The book of Offices by Cicero contains the most complete epitome of our duty to be found in any of the ancient moralists. It is true, he had the advantage of all the light which had been thrown upon the subject by those who preceded him in the same road, and indeed, both in his metaphysical and moral writings, he has done little more than translated the Greek philosophers ; but in his Offices, by a selection from them all, he has formed a system of morality more complete than any one of them singly was able to compose ; for by the principles of his sect, which was that of the New Academy, he was at liberty to choose

the best parts of every other, without being servilely attached to any. He sets out with combating the doctrine of the Epicureans, in which he proceeds upon the same mistake which I have already noticed, viz. that Epicurus separated pleasure from virtue, and he contends that virtue is to be admired on her own account,—a disinterested motive of action certainly, but I much doubt whether supported by experience.—Being firmly attached to the Stoics, he does not altogether avoid some of their subtleties, but on the whole, he has drawn up the most intelligible, copious, and practicable system of morality to be found among the ancients. Throughout his discourse he considers the *honestum* and the *utile* as not to be separated, because nothing can be useful in the end to any individual which is not so to the whole of society, nor any thing generally useful to society which is not the same to the individual. A temporary and partial interest may be served by vice or dishonesty, but nothing can ultimately be for our advantage which tends to injure the community. The love of virtue he conceives to be derived from an innate love of harmony and propriety ; but why suppose this innate, when we see the consequences of virtue to be the production of

happiness and comfort ? Proportion and regularity we admire in external objects, not merely for themselves and independent of their effects, but because they produce convenience and give pleasure to the mind. It is the same in moral actions ; we do not admire them on account of their approximation to some imaginary standard, but on account of their actual utility or fitness to produce happiness.

The best part of the Stoical philosophy was that which considered men to be created for the mutual support and defence of each other, which Pope has adopted in pronouncing self-love and social to be the same.* Cicero also in his morals proceeds on the same principles, and thence deduces the right of every man to claim the benevolent regard of others in distress and difficulty ; yet he avoids the splendid excesses of Zeno, and takes care neither to despise pain nor riches, but considers the efforts of every man for his own subsistence calculated to produce the comforts, and even luxuries of life, by promoting arts and commerce. No man, says he, is to be blamed for wishing to encrease his own fortune, provided it is done

* *Ethic Epist. 31. 318.*

without injustice to others. He considers it also as a species of injustice to neglect the defence of others when it is in our power: this sentiment he has borrowed from the Stoics. The different duties and relations of life are more minutely treated than in any other ancient philosopher, so much so, that modern times have hardly added any improvement to the system which Cicero composed. All that we owe to our friends, to our country, and to ourselves, is there explained with the utmost accuracy; even doubtful and difficult cases are proposed and solved with all that simplicity which a great mind alone can display in the most complicated concerns; he has guarded against the misapplication of generosity and benevolence, and pointed out their true limits with precision; he has explained the nature, extent, and uses of gratitude; he has laid open the first principles of society, and the motives which induced men to unite together, describing the gradual progress of civilization from the forest, to the polished city. "But of all societies," says he, "that which is the most firm and the most excellent, is the union of good men brought together by a similarity of sentiments and pursuits." This, if there be happiness on earth, is happiness supreme.--

He has adopted the Platonic division of virtue into four sorts—Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance—and under each department has described their various ramifications ; he has entered not only into the duties but the decencies of life, and prescribed the limits to amusement, to mirth, and jesting, with the minute accuracy of a man thoroughly conversant with life and with the best company ; he has given rules for health, dress, and convenience, and hardly left any department of society unexplored ; and in all this, abandoning the rigid severity of the Stoics on the one hand, he has considered man as he is with a view to make him better ; rather than prescribed rules, which being too severe for our nature are more likely to be neglected by the generality than practised even by a few. On the other hand he has avoided to countenance the contemplative life of the Peripatetics, and considering mankind to be intended for active exertions, he has insisted most on those duties which concern our relative station in society. The knowledge of mankind, and every thing relating to human life and its concerns, he held to be the most valuable of all sciences ; an opinion which a modern poet has adopted when he tells us that the proper

study of mankind is man. What Pope borrowed from him, he borrowed from Socrates, a greater man than either, if we estimate the value of information by its priority.

The morality of Cicero, like that of Socrates, embraces all ranks and conditions of life from the palace to the cottage, and is therefore more generally useful than the recondite disquisitions of Zeno, Plato, or Aristotle. The book which contains his description of moral duties or offices was addressed to his son, and therefore deserves to be compared with another which a great orator of modern times addressed to his son also.—In the advice of the ancient, every thing is solid; in that of the modern, every thing is superficial; virtue with the one has an actual existence, and depends not on any opinions or conventions of men, but on its natural tendency to produce happiness; with the other she is but a name, an ornament, an external appearance, which must be put on, the better to promote our sordid interest, or to obtain the purposes of ambition and vanity; with the one, honesty and truth are the great rules of action; with the other, dissimulation and fraud; with the one, all men are rogues, and must be treated as such; by the other, we are recommended to be honest

ourselves, let others be what they may: a great and noble motive is held up by the Roman, calculated to improve the world, and exalt the nature of man, while the degenerate Briton recommends only the gratification of a pitiful, temporary interest, and the acquisition of a short-lived popularity: the maxim of the one is, "To be," that of the other, "To seem;" yet the advice of the former is not less calculated than that of the latter to form a man of the world; whoever wishes his son to be both an honest man and a gentleman will send him to study Cicero; whoever wishes him to be a gentleman only, may send him to Lord Chesterfield, and if the young man should possess nothing but the exterior of virtue, the father must not be surprised. The same remarks, on a similar comparison, may be extended to the French moralist, whom his lordship pointed out to his son for his morning and evening study.—The moderation, not the extinction, of the passions, is the advice of Cicero, and in this indeed consists almost the whole of virtue. The economy or management of our families he does not consider beneath his notice, and following the example of Socrates, he gives many useful maxims on this important duty, which he that neglects,

ought hardly to be trusted in the greater concerns of society. In short, Tully's offices are the best manual extant of our rights and duties.

The mutability of human affairs is in no respect more worthy of admiration than in those things which relate to the human intellect. Many books which were read with avidity an hundred years ago, are now thrown aside as useless lumber, or consigned to the pastry-cook and the trunk-maker; this neglect arises both from the subjects and the manner of treating them; and that man must have possessed a very powerful intellect who could overcome the awkward mode of communicating his thoughts which prevailed in England two hundred years ago.—Hobbes was not one of those whose mind was sufficiently vigorous to survive this powerful impediment; he is now, therefore, laid aside for more intelligible instructors, yet in his metaphysics he was the forerunner of Locke and Helvetius. He was the first Englishman who maintained that all our knowledge is derived from the senses, and that the mind of man, at his birth, is a mere blank--a *tabula rasa*--a sheet of white paper; whence it arises that the minds of all men are naturally equal, (*vide Leviathan,*

cap. 13.) In this, and in different parts of his writings he has maintained, "That there is no such thing as natural dispositions;" consequently all men's actions depend on the circumstances in which they are placed.—"Whatsoever we imagine," said he, "is finite; when we say a thing is infinite, we signify only, that we are not able to conceive the ends and bounds of the thing named. No man can conceive any thing, but he must conceive it in some place; for nothing else can be incident to sense;" (vide Leviathan 3.) and he has told us before, that nothing can be conceived but thro' the medium of the senses. The weight and value of these two axioms are sufficient to immortalize the name of Hobbes, as tending to limit the speculations of finite intellect, and settle our knowledge on the sure basis of experience. "Reason," says he, "is not born with us, but attained by industry." "We love that which we wish for, and our will is nothing but the object of our appetite—the acquisition of these objects constitutes our felicity." "Virtue consists in choosing between the different objects of our desires, that which appears best when they are compared together." With the political doctrine of Hobbes I have nothing to do at present; from the small specimen I have

given of his moral and metaphysical writings, it may be seen that we are chiefly indebted to him for those rational notions of the nature and duties of man, which have been since more fully explained by Locke and by Helvetius, and that therefore to these three men we are more indebted than to all the high-flown conceited notions of divines, of schoolmen, and of sophists, who have bewildered the world with their romantic speculations on the nature of spiritual essences, of incorporeal substances, and of self-existent beings, above human comprehension or intelligence.

The chief propositions relating to the mind which were asserted by Mr Locke have a reference to our conduct as intellectual beings, and they are as follow: first, That there are no innate ideas; this had been before obscurely perceived by Aristotle, Epicurus, and Hobbes, —it was more fully illustrated by Locke, and finally confirmed by Helvetius: from hence it results that there are no innate practical principles, and consequently no such thing as general notions of right and wrong independent of utility, confirmed by experience. The manner in which he accounts for a contrary belief demands the serious attention of every man who is accustomed to take his opinions

upon other people's authority. Having denied all principles, both speculative and practical, to be innate, he proceeds to shew how they are acquired. His next great principle, which has been of such service to the world, is derived from Epicurus, viz. that pleasure and pain are the measure of good and evil to mankind. Mr Locke was probably the first man who maintained that morality is capable of demonstration, but he cannot mean in the same manner as mathematics, because the one exists in the nature of things, and the other is only to be proved by experience; it is demonstrable, without any previous experience, that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, and it is a fact independent of our knowledge of it; but to do to others what we desire them to do to us, is only demonstrated to be a good maxim from the result of experience; to prove the consequence of a thing to be good, is different from proving a thing's actual existence. The advantage to be derived from Mr Locke's philosophy in a practical light is almost incalculable, yet there are some things which detract from its general utility; his language is tedious and verbose; he deals too much in metaphysical subtlety, and his religious principles, in some measure,

restrain the freedom of his enquiries, and lead him into inconsistency ; yet, on the whole, so valuable are his philosophical researches in promoting the operation of our intellectual powers, as applied to the exercise of morality, that I think no greater service could be done to the rising generation than to give a correct and intelligible abridgement of his Essay on the Human Understanding, so that all men might read it, and all who read might understand.

The philosophy of Shaftesbury is not the philosophy of reason but of imagination ; for his leading doctrines are incapable of being proved, tho' they are illustrated with all the charms of fancy. Virtue with him is not a real practical system of conduct, but a romantic creature of the imagination, which exists prior to and unconnected with any actual advantage which it conveys to society. These, and other flights of metaphysics which he has borrowed from Plato and the Stoics, and handed down to Bolingbroke, to Pope, Hutcheson, and others of the Scotch philosophers, may be considered as pleasing reveries calculated to divert the minds of speculative philosophers, but incapable of producing any good to the world. The foolish system of optimism, and

the incomprehensible doctrine of the moral sense or virtuous instinct, may amuse, but they can never improve mankind; for they by no means rationally account for the moral phenomena of the world, nor give a satisfactory explanation of the motives of human actions. To say that every thing is for the best in a system where much is acknowledged to be bad, may satisfy implicit faith, but can never convince enquiring reason; and to tell us that men are instinctively impelled to right and wrong, is to take from the dignity of rational beings and degrade us to the level of brutes. Such doctrines may yet find a few disciples, but they will neither satisfy the faith of Christians, who account for the existence of evil by a more pious machinery, nor silence the doubts of infidels who believe in nothing which cannot be proved. The only practical system of belief is that which trusts every thing to reason, and hesitates where that can go no farther: it is founded in utility, and confirmed by experience.

Mr Hume improved, explained, and extended the philosophy of Locke, tho' in many respects he differs from him; his metaphysics and his morality are both derived from facts, and if in the former he is mistaken in his de-

ductions by giving too much weight to the system of benevolence, it is an amiable error, and certainly not of much importance. The doctrine of utility found in him an able defender, for no man has more successfully exposed the folly of the Stoics in supposing virtue to be amiable on her own account independent of her consequences than Mr Hume; by a repeated appeal to facts he has placed the matter beyond a doubt. He has not quite so successfully espoused the doctrine of disinterested benevolence in opposition to what is called the selfish system; for tho' in effect there is not much difference between a refined self-love and a generous philanthropy, yet it will not be difficult to prove that man being a creature who acts solely from his own sensations and feelings is incapable of tasting any pleasure from the connection with his species independent of his own gratification. All our actions being allowed to proceed from a regard to ourselves must be called selfish, but there is a refined and a gross self-love, the former of which derives pleasure from the pleasures of others, and the latter solely from ourselves; this distinction will, I trust, be found sufficient to explain what has been hitherto frequently confounded; for men acting entirely from ha-

bit, the motives of their actions are frequently concealed even from themselves, and they who have repeatedly experienced the pleasures of benevolence are apt to conceive benevolence to be exerted independent of self-satisfaction, for in time they become so closely connected, that the impulse of the one is generally mistaken for that of the other. Self-love is the first emotion of the human heart, and very properly so; a child in its first years can have no idea but of its own preservation, but as it becomes more connected with the world, if endowed with sufficient sensibility and properly educated, it acquires the feelings of benevolence, or a regard for others; and here the distinction takes place between gross and refined self-love; it is from not attending to this distinction that Dr Parr has classed Rousseau and Helvetius, Mandeville and Rochefoucault, and consequently Chesterfield, together; whereas the two former only assert that men are originally selfish, but admit the fullest exercise of benevolence; the latter affirm that man is continually actuated by the grossest selfishness, and that benevolence is only a cloak more effectually to disguise its deformity. Hume and others maintain the existence of the benevolent affections, simply

and unconnected with any selfish feeling ; yet it is difficult to conceive why a man should love his species, or do a kindness to individuals, without being actuated by a sense of the pleasure he feels in so doing ; the supposition is inconsistent with a knowledge of our nature strictly analysed ; and the fact is, that our admiration of the social virtues, arises not merely from their tendency to promote the public good, independent of their own, but from a remote reference to ourselves ; whatever in the first instance gives us pleasure by gratifying the mind or senses, in a more extensive view, pleases us by the idea that it does the same to others, and the more extensive its utility the greater our pleasure, till in time we comprehend the universe in the circle of our benevolence.

The treatise of Helvetius on the mind, tho' laboring under the defects which arise from a love of system, is to a certain extent capable of producing great good ; because it satisfactorily and clearly accounts for many operations of the human mind, which were before not fully comprehended ; its greatest error is that of attributing every thing to education, and leaving nothing to nature, or to that early disposition of mind which results from the formation of

the bodily system. That the senses are the only inlets to knowledge, and that the love of pleasure, and aversion to pain, or in other words, self-interest, is the great motive of all our actions, he has successfully, and indisputably proved; but he goes too far in maintaining that the capacities and tempers of all men are naturally equal.

Professor Grimaldi in his *Riflessioni sopra l'Inegualanza tra gli uomini*, cap. 7. is a formidable antagonist; De la Metheterie has displayed all his physiological knowledge to overthrow the positions of Helvetius, and they two have convinced every impartial person that the original difference of temperament will make a considerable difference in the minds of men. The matter seems to stand thus.—Allowing to Helvetius that the mind depends on the physical organization of the body, we must allow to his opponents, that even where that organization is complete, it is different in different men, and that the nerves of all men are not equally irritable, nor the brain equally capable of receiving and retaining ideas; for as in all other animals their bodily formation has a considerable influence on their qualities, so it cannot be denied that the formation of the human mind must depend

greatly on the temperament of the body ; but here the similarity ceases, for external impressions also contribute their share in a very great proportion; hence it will follow, that tho' education cannot do all, it must still affect the formation of the mind in a degree which can hardly be expressed. Men bring no ideas into the world with them, but they bring a capacity for receiving ideas, which in almost all men is different.

Dugald Stewart is a practical metaphysician, he has redeemed that dreary science from the *opprobrium* under which it labored, and caused refined speculation to go hand in hand with practical philosophy. He has shewn the true ends and uses of all enquiries into the nature of the human mind, and by applying the result of these enquiries to politics and morality, has rendered a service to metaphysicians, to moralists, and to the world, which can never be obliterated ; and I will not hesitate to pronounce, that the second chapter of his introduction to the Elements of Philosophy, is the most valuable piece of philosophical admonition now extant. Tho' I admire his candor and liberality, I by no means on all occasions agree with him.

The moral philosophy of Dr Paley is of a

very liberal complexion for a Christian divine, yet it is not free from the errors of his profession, nor the mistakes of former moralists; his definition of virtue is not sufficiently general, it belongs only to one set of men, and excludes all those who act right from any motive short of those which are termed religious. "Virtue," he says, "is the doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God, for the sake of everlasting happiness." According to this definition, no man can be virtuous who disbelieves in a future state of existence. A most false and illiberal position, and contradicted by every day's experience. Dr Paley seems to forget that all the world are not Christians; yet in his chapter on utility, he has placed virtue on its proper basis, by excluding all arbitrary notions which have no existence but in the conceit of fanciful speculation, and by declaring that no action can be virtuous which is not consistent with the general good. The advantages derived to mankind, by the declaration of such a principle, from such authority, and by its being now publicly taught in our schools and universities, is hardly to be conceived; it has overthrown the scholastic lumber of ages, and brought mankind, in their moral speculations and practice, to consult the

dictates of reason, and the lessons of experience.

To appreciate fairly the merits of Mr Godwin's philosophy, so as to keep the balance even between those who have unjustly praised, and those who have not less unjustly condemned it, is no easy task. It is very difficult to be impartial, yet it is required of all those who sit in judgment on the property, the talents, or the merits of others; for it is by truth only that the world can be enlightened. The great principle on which he founds the whole of his system, tho' a broad one, is too narrow for the superstructure which he has built upon it. Justice cannot comprehend the whole of our duty, because the intercourse of society brings us in contact with each other at various points; to some we owe one thing, and to some another, we owe justice to all; and tho' private duties, where they interfere with public ones, must give way, it does not follow that we are to neglect our nearest relatives for any uncertain public good. The duties of private life are clear, and easily ascertained; those we owe to the public are not so readily defined. The strictness of Mr Godwin's principles resembles that of the Stoics; they laid down a system which they affirmed to be the only true one;

and from which there was to be no departure by those who wished to be either wise or happy ; he does the same, which, considering the fallibility of human judgment, is much too arbitrary and positive. Nothing faultless is to be expected from any one man, but there are few men whose writings do not contain some good. To select the best from each, and compile for the use of the vulgar, belongs to men of superior talents. Mr Godwin errs also materially in another view, he thinks too highly of man, he supposes him to be capable of arriving at a much higher degree of excellence than the analogy of nature, or the experience of the world will justify ; but tho' he errs in the fact, the opinion can do no harm, and has a tendency to do good. Mankind will never be improved but by aiming at something higher than they have power to attain, and whoever can induce them to do this, is doing them a service. No man, therefore, has ever objected to Mr Godwin that his system is not useful ; the most that can be said is, that it is not practicable ; but let all men follow his advice, and they will come much nearer to his model, than by vainly disputing with each other, and resting in their present state of indolence. All his arguments tend to the advancement of

reason and truth, and to convince men that the world can never be rendered happy, but by these instruments; whether these will ever be sufficiently prevalent, is much to be doubted. The morality of Mr Godwin is of a strong, corroborative kind, it is like a cold bath to the body, or tonics to the stomach; it is no palliative system which tends to conceal the defects of human nature, or recommends only gentle remedies for their cure; it searches to the bottom of our impurities, and purges them off by vigorous potions; it is calculated to strengthen, improve, and invigorate our nature, and he that can read it without feeling himself more strongly impelled to virtue, and more refined in his motives, must have an impenetrable head or a depraved heart, must be either bewildered by enthusiasm, stupefied by prejudice, or immersed in vice; he must be a blockhead, a profligate, or a bigot. Tho' I speak of the best parts of Mr Godwin's book on Political Justice, I must allow that there are others highly exceptionable, because they contain principles impracticable, ridiculous, and unjust. His notions of justice are pushed to such an extreme, as to weaken or destroy the best propensities of our nature, and under the idea of a vague general good, to loosen

the amiable ties of affection and gratitude, and in the end destroy the purpose he intended to promote. His speculations on the future condition of mankind are so ridiculous, as hardly to merit a serious examination. That part which relates to population has been examined, and ably confuted by Mr Malthus, who by opposing facts to opinions, has established principles in political economy which bid defiance to all the attacks of sophistry and bigotry. The best parts of Mr Godwin's theory, I am sorry to say, have had their influence considerably lessened by the nonsense with which they are mingled, and the number of his readers are now much diminished.

In the early ages of the world men always act more from their imagination than their reason, hence all systems of morality rested on some religious belief; it is time now that it should stand by itself.—It is of full and mature age and capable of standing without such support, for whether there is a Deity or not, such as men have conceived him, it will always be for the general interest, and therefore the duty of individuals, that men should act honestly and kindly towards each other, and prudently towards themselves; and the necessity for this is so strongly fixed in the na-

ture of things, and the means of it in the minds of some men, that it is requisite it should be generally taught, in order that those who by natural disposition are not inclined to honesty and generosity, should be trained up to the practice of those virtues as the effect of habit and instruction. Morality, simply considered as the bond of society, has no more to do with a future life than it has with a past one. Men seldom act in the common concerns of the world from the hope of a distant and uncertain reward, they feel impelled by something more immediate and forcible.

A convenient Manual of the moral duties, selected from the Bible and other writings, is in the present state of society a great *desideratum*. Many such have been attempted, but they have all fallen short of that concise simplicity which is requisite for common understandings, they are all too metaphysical and not sufficiently perceptive. The best of any yet published is the *Catechisme Universel*, by St Lambert.

The amiable and venerable author of the above-mentioned system has endeavored to select whatever is excellent from the different speculations of former philosophers, and if he does not embrace implicitly the doctrines of

any, he is the more to be admired for keeping himself free from their follies and mistakes; he is certainly most inclined to the opinions of Epicurus, as being the most practicable, and consequently best calculated for general utility. He considers that the great end and use of morality is to teach men to enjoy life innocently, and he finds that this purpose is best promoted by the moderate and alternate pleasures of reason and the senses; and that whoever gives too much of his time or attention to one particular pursuit, is more likely to injure than to promote enjoyment. By such a philosophic regulation of his life the author preserved his existence till the extreme period of ninety-three, with health and vivacity.

The system of De la Metherie differs little from that of Helvetius, except that he considers the talents and tempers of men to depend more on their physical organization; yet he by no means denies the strong effect of education and external circumstances. Like Helvetius, he considers man originally but a degree removed from the ouran-outang, and in his present state to be wholly the creature of art, so that his faculties and powers owe their development entirely to society, and by one single faculty alone he is placed above the brutes;

yet that faculty has so much need of cultivation, that without it, man in a natural state is hardly a rational creature. His analysis of man is most minute and complete, he follows him thro' every gradation, from the inarticulate savage to the highest state of intellectual improvement. Helvetius analyses the species, De la Metherie the individual; it is in such authors as these, who are exalted above vulgar errors, that the true nature of man is to be found. The two last chapters of De la Metherie I recommend to the particular and constant attention of those who seek after truth divested of habit and prejudice.

In a treatise on morality it may naturally be expected that I should say something upon Suicide. In the first place then I consider it no crime, because every man has a right to that which is his own, and nothing can be more his own than his life. No man has a right to the life of another, tho' men collectively, that is the public, have a right to take away the lives of those who take away the lives of others, which is the greatest of all crimes. When we have both the right and the power to take away our life, it is a mere matter of prudence whether we should exert it or not. It seldom happens, however, that any man is reduced to

such a state as to be without hope, and therefore few men can be justified in having recourse to this last resort of misery. To be unable to bear trouble and distress is a proof of a gloomy and impatient disposition, and therefore inconsistent with the dictates of wisdom and philosophy—but surely society, if they had the power, can never have a right to punish any man because he chooses to fly from misfortune, and it is mean and pitiful to shew indignity to a dead body, particularly since it is found to be useless as an example. To confiscate the goods of the deceased is unjust, because the punishment falls on the innocent.—The best remedies against suicide are good government and philosophy.

The great support of morality is the opinion of the virtuous, and were they unanimous in discountenancing vice and iniquity, by whomsoever committed, the frequency of such deviations would be considerably lessened, and the world considerably improved; but when every species of meanness and villainy which does not grossly offend against the law, is countenanced not only by the wicked, who are naturally kind to each other, but by men who profess to have a hatred of vice, and to wish well to the happiness of society, it is not to be

wondered that virtue diminishes, and crimes multiply.

The difference between an active moral principle and the mere restraints of decency and convenience is much greater than men generally imagine; the one can only be found in a pure state of society, the other may be submitted to in an age of the utmost profligacy. Moral principles can never operate to any great extent amid the blandishments of luxury, the excess of riches, and the speculations of commerce. The tendency of vice to produce disease and unhappiness is the sole reason why it should be banished from society, and if men were only prevailed on to consider the consequences of their actions, they might possibly stop before they endangered their health and happiness by a continued course of debauchery. Health and content are the greatest blessings of life; without the former riches are nothing, and as to the latter, tho' riches cannot give it, they may take it away; for the rich have so many artificial wants that they seldom find them all indulged.

The great criterion of civilization is the value at which the lives of human beings are estimated; but as there seems to be a radical defect in the system of the world, consisting in

the disproportion which exists between the increase of population and the means of subsistence, it is to be apprehended that mankind will never be completely civilized; that is to say, completely under the dominion of reason and morality. A principle of destruction is implanted in almost all the different parts of nature; some animals are formed expressly to contend with and to feed upon each other, and with man the state of nature is a state of war, which civilization does not entirely change, tho' it somewhat lessens its ferocity and its frequency; and all this for the purpose of counteracting their too great tendency to propagate. Till we make all men think alike upon all subjects, wars and tumults will never cease, and that period seems to be very distant; individuals and nations, therefore, must in the meantime do the best they can for themselves, without grossly violating the principles of justice, but to expect that all men will ever act honestly, and prefer a remote to a present interest, is as ridiculous as it would be according to Hudibras to expect,

All taylor's yards of one
Unanimous opinion.

“ The false weight and the false balance are an abomination to the Lord,” and so they are to

those who are too honest to use them, but there will always be some that will, in defiance of law, scripture, and philosophy.

Tho' much has been said and written about the rights of man, I much question whether they have any rights antecedent to a state of society ; and if so, their duties can only arise out of the same state of civilization. Reason is the criterion of right, and law is its best preserver. Strength of force may sometimes be substituted for reason, and become sanctioned by time and possession, but the foundations of justice can never be altered, and tho' it is to be lamented, that right may sometimes be overpowered by might, yet power can never confound the distinction between right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust. A man of consistent integrity continually acts from a regard to what he owes to the general interest ; such a man seldom suffers his passions to get the better of his feelings or his judgment, but if our continual study is to please the world, we can have no leisure to study ourselves, and unless we have formed accurate notions of duty or morality, and continually refer our conduct to these rules, we can do right or wrong only by chance, and can never deserve the praise of virtue even from the multitude.

An opinion, altogether subversive of morality and destructive to the happiness of society, has been advanced by Mr Grimm and by others, mere men of the world, who judge of all things by the rules of temporary convenience, viz. That treatises and precepts of morality are useless, as every man's own interest will teach him to see that which is for his good, and that nothing else will have any influence on his conduct. If this be true, it strikes at the foundation of all arts and sciences, for it asserts that principles are nothing, and that every man must be his own instructor and guide.

Whoever acts upon the short-sighted consideration of his immediate interest, has not advanced two degrees beyond a savage, who is governed by the mere impulse of the moment. The distinguishing character of civilized man is to act upon general principles, and a regard to consequences, both as they affect himself, and others. How is he to arrive at the knowledge of these principles but by early instruction, or subsequent reflection? thence the use of principles or maxims derived from experience of particular facts, which being impressed on the youthful mind, become the means of forming virtuous and moral

habits. It is only by considering the general consequences of particular actions that they can be pronounced good or evil, for that which may seem good to an individual for a short time, may in the event, be evil both to himself and others ; hence, then it must be laid down as a general rule, that all such actions should be avoided.

The more men reflect on the consequence of their actions, the more moral they will become ; and it is almost impossible that any man can be considered as a moral and rational being who does not act from the result of early good habits, or much meditation. No individual can be able to tell, by the mere exertion of his natural understanding, the whole effects of his conduct either on himself or others, but when from an attentive observation of mankind, the general tendency of actions is generalized into principles, and taught by rules and maxims. He who neglects to avail himself of the experience and wisdom of others, or to instruct his children by these general rules, is guilty of a gross breach of his duty to society, and deserves to suffer for his criminality. Books of morality are also useful, inasmuch as they put the subject in various lights, and afford various arguments for the perform-

ance of our duty, and against a life conducted on the mere suggestions of temporary interest.

The best foundation of morality is an enlarged and philosophical view of mankind, by which it will be seen that nature has not provided for the full enjoyment either of our rational or sensual faculties, and that it is, therefore, the duty and interest of man to submit to many privations, and to accommodate himself to much evil and inconvenience; that it becomes him to do all the good in his power, since it is only by such benevolent exertions that the evils of nature and society can be remedied. Man is not a creature of unlimited power, nor can he even exert all his powers in this world of inequality; he must restrain many propensities, and deny himself many pleasures, for the sake of future consequences; he must purchase the happiness of one day at the expense of that of another; he must deprive himself of many things for his own sake, and for the sake of others; he must calculate with almost mathematical accuracy the different actions of his life, if he wishes to spend it with tolerable satisfaction and comfort. In short, he must exercise his reason rather than his faith, if he wishes to understand the nature of

things around him, and the one requires no more time and trouble than the other.

The advantage to be derived from the study of all the different rules and systems of morality does not consist merely in theoretical wisdom, but in practical melioration ; for whoever reads either history, morality, or philosophy, without becoming a better man than he was capable of being without such knowledge, has read to no purpose, and might as well have been idle, or otherwise employed. Man is naturally a savage; it is only by a comparison of ideas that he becomes civilized; and without this he has studied a vain philosophy, but it is almost impossible to become familiarized to any particular turn of thinking without its having some influence on the conduct, tho' it sometimes happens that men who read much, think little, and consequently their reading has little effect on their actions. Such a hopeless state of mind no advice can possibly improve ; but those who are not beyond the power of receiving good impressions, it may be useful to advise to keep their minds open to the influence of what they read, and not to suffer themselves to be drawn from the wisdom of the wise by the folly of the world ; to read with a desire to be improved, and not as a mere mechanical em-

ployment. To men who apply to books with such intentions, the great advantage to be derived from the study of moral philosophy, consists in acquiring general principles in opposition to the loose morality of the world, and in remarking that however philosophers may differ as to the ends and motives of human conduct, they all agree in some general rules which are essential to happiness. They all agree, that the study of knowledge, wisdom, or morality, is of all others the most excellent; that the maxims by which a virtuous man ought to form his conduct are in constant contradiction to the maxims of the world, and that a philosopher ought to despise the opinion of the vulgar; that happiness consists in mediocrity, that virtue is to be acquired only by meditation and study, that justice is the first of virtues, that purity of heart, that truth, and honesty are to be preferred to all earthly goods, and that benevolence is the great bond of society. These and many other such maxims are only to be established in a man's mind by a constant perusal of the best writers on morality.

Morality, unconnected with religion, rests solely on the foundation of reason, and is the sole preserver of the peace of the world; reli-

gion is the reverse, for every religion believing itself the true one, is of course intolerant towards all others, and seeks to subject all to its own faith, hence come "wars and fightings." Reason is one and the same in all climates and countries, and therefore it can never be at variance with itself, nor persecute others who are the most remote from its doctrines; it may seek to convert, but never by the means of force or violence; its only weapons are persuasion and argument; its creed is simple and intelligible, for it believes nothing which it cannot understand, nor enforces more upon others; it pretends not to comprehend either the formation or government of the world, and limits its researches to the moral duties between man and man; it teaches us to do to others what we wish them to do to us, and seeks its own good without neglecting that of others; it tells us in one word that general utility is the first rule of all our actions, and that while we do harm to ourselves or others, we do harm to the community. Much more may be taught, but much more it is not easy to comprehend.

The reason of man is the only standard of right and wrong; it is therefore to him the only criterion of morality, and the only means by which he can form an idea of a divinity.

The sensible objects of nature exist externally, or independent of man ; virtue exists in his actions ; but a Deity exists only in the idea we form of him; we imagine, we believe, but we never can prove his existence. We all know and feel that there is much good and much evil in the world ; but when we attempt to find out how or whence they come, we only bewilder our reason, without adding to our happiness. The good, men call God, and the evil, they call the Devil; thus vainly imagining that they have discovered their origin, when they have only personified their existence. Ignorance is the mother of devotion, and the world has always worshipped the creatures of its own imagination ; for a Deity exists only in the mind of man. The external world admits of sensible proof, but the world of spirits admits of no proof at all, and the morality of our actions does not in any degree depend on our spiritual belief, tho' men may imagine themselves actuated by such motives ; it is our temporal and sensual interests which alone influence our conduct, and on the regulation of our interests and passions depends the whole of our morality. Reason, therefore, is the only sure guide, sanction, and support of nations and of individuals, and when the latter

err or do amiss, they must be judged by the general sense of mankind, which is the only infallible tribunal for all human guilt. Good, or the means of happiness, is the constant object of man's admiration and pursuit, this the heathens worshipped under various forms, the Deist and the Christian under one. The passions are said to be various, tho' in fact there are but two, love and fear, the rest are only their different modifications. Principles are general rules deduced from experience.

Religion and morality have been so long united that it is almost impossible to dissolve the union; yet considering how essentially they differ, one almost wonders how they ever came together. Religion exists solely in the mind of man, morality in his actions; the one varies according to the temper of those from whom it has originated, the other is in all countries nearly the same. Religion rests solely on imagination, morality on reason and facts. The scripture says, God made man after his own image; had it said the contrary it would have expressed the truth; for the character of the Deity differs according to the different characters of those by whom he is worshipped; with the Jews he is a God of cruelty and terror; with the Hindoos of tol-

ration and great mercy. Morality is in some degree affected by local customs and popular propensities, but its fundamental principles are in all countries the same. Religions are as various as the beings from whom they have originated, but morality is the same throughout the world; it enjoins no cruel sacrifices, it ordains no bloody rites, it speaks in all nations the language of reason, justice, and utility. All systems of religion are but attempts to account for the origin and operations of nature, and are generally veiled in allegory.

THE CONDITION OF MORTALITY EXAMINED.

MAN, never satisfied with the present, is always looking back to what he has been, or forward to what he is to be ; the propensity to the former, however, is not so general as that to the latter. Few have adopted the system of Pythagoras, compared to those who believe in a future existence, yet the one is not more difficult to prove than the other. Mankind are apt to fall into two extremes with regard to the future ; some think too little about it and some too much ; true wisdom lies between the two. The evil that is never thought of is borne with difficulty, that which is foreseen becomes lighter. We cannot fly from Fate, it is wise therefore to be forewarned of its arrival. A modern author of considerable acuteness, maintains that it is impossible to account for the evils of the present life without supposing it to be a state of punishment

for sins committed in a former state, and of probation towards a future; whether he was serious it is difficult now to determine; if he was, it will be easy to prove his argument ridiculous; and if he was not, we must admire the keenness of his irony. The strongest argument against a prior state of existence, is that we are not conscious of it; and to be punished for what we have no knowledge or remembrance of at the time we are punished, can have no tendency towards our amendment, which is, or ought to be the great object of punishment. On the other hand, those who believe in a future state, to be consistent, ought to believe in a past; for if the soul of man is capable of existing to all eternity, it is difficult to conceive how it could have had a beginning; for that which is eternal ought no more to be limited at one end than at the other. But tho' a future state of existence is barely probable, a past one is impossible; the idea disproves itself; for if we have existed, it has been to no purpose, as it leaves no remembrance. The arguments for a future state having some probability on their side, have obtained a very general reception, and being attended also with some apparent advantage to mankind, will not easily be discredited among the mul-

titude, but those who judge and act from a regard to the real state of things, and not from false appearances, will probably listen to the contrary arguments by which they may be disproved. The direct proof of a future state can only be derived from the word of God, or a divine revelation; but we have no revelation which does not contradict both the evidence of the senses and of experience; independent of revelation, therefore, the belief of a future state must rest solely on probability. The analogy of nature, it is said, points out to us this probability from the several changes we have already experienced; but this analogy is defective in not referring to a state of past existence, because, could such a state be proved, the analogy would be rendered much stronger than by merely stating the changes which have happened in the present, for they contain no analogy at all with reference to a future state, and can only be applied to the probability of still greater in the present. The destruction of the vital functions puts an end to all hopes arising from analogy, unless it could be proved that this life is a resurrection from a former state of existence; but so far from having a consciousness of any prior life, we are even ignorant of what happened to us in the early

part of our present existence ; it seems then that a principle or essence, which was at first so weak and indistinct, can hardly be intended for immortality ; it is not fair, therefore, to conclude that we shall be immortal merely because we wish to be so. The argument taken from the analogy of the scriptures to the constitution of nature, is equally defective, because it is requisite that in all analogical reasoning the things which we reason about should exactly resemble each other ; thus, to argue that the sun will rise to-morrow because it has risen for a thousand years, is a fair analogy, because the cases are exactly similar ; but to argue that there must be difficulties in the scriptures because there are difficulties in the order of nature, allowing them to be from the same author, is a false analogy, because the things do not resemble each other, and besides it takes for granted that the scriptures are the word of God, which is by no means proved. To argue from what we see here, to what we expect hereafter, is no more warranted than to suppose that because a man has lived sixty years he will live a hundred.

The argument for a future life derived from the evils and injustice of the present, rests solely on our ideas of the Divinity, which are

by no means capable of proof, and therefore has not much tendency to strengthen that which was originally weak. To argue from what is defective to something complete, is a very liberal mode of argument, but hardly warranted by the laws of sound reasoning.— We might as well suppose that because a watchmaker has formed a very bad watch, he can therefore make a very good one. To those who infer a future state of rewards and punishments, from the prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of good men, it is easy to reply with this strong fact—The wicked are not always so happy in this world, nor the good so unhappy as some men imagine, and vice is nine times out of ten its own punishment. The belief of a future state tends considerably to weaken the efficacy of morality, for they who have been early accustomed to act from no other motive than a fear of punishment, should that ever be removed or forgotten, will never believe that to restrain their appetites and passions, is most conformable to their duty and their interest.

Our notions of a future state derive their origin and strength from that love of life which grows up with man and makes him unwilling to leave it, and so he soothes himself with the

idea of another, as children are enticed to part with their playthings by telling them they shall have others in their stead ; it is strengthened also by that vanity and presumption which make us believe that we hold a higher rank in the universe than we actually do. Our powers and faculties are great no doubt, compared with those of beasts, yet nothing compared to the universe around us, of which we neither can comprehend the cause, the nature, nor the end. And after all, what are the boasted privileges and superiority of man ; he is born with faculties capable of almost unlimited improvement, but for all this he is only one degree removed from a monkey; he comes into the world in a mode both indelicate and distressing, a mode which requires some such apology as that contained in the book of *Genesis* or *Generation*, c. 3. v. 16.--he continues in a helpless state much longer than any other animal ; through disease of body or mind he often drags on a miserable existence and wishes he had never been born. Some men, however, arrive at maturity both of body and mind, and others attain to the highest excellence of their nature by the improvement of their rational powers ; but the greater part perish in a state of comparative non-

entity, before they have acquired the faculties or bodily strength which are common to their race, and many others without having obtained a proper improvement of their rational faculty. Others die, apparently of little consequence to the rest of the creation, and are carried off in the prime and vigor of their existence, by war, by pestilence, and famine; and even those whose lives seem to be of the greatest importance to their friends and fellow creatures are suddenly removed from the sphere of their usefulness, and reduced to a lifeless lump of mortality; of so little value is human life in the system of the universe. One should think this might teach us humility, might teach us to be content with our present state, to improve our present existence, and cease to soar after a distant and uncertain being, which must in every respect be independent of any thing we do here, as the present is of any thing that may be past. We know not what we have been, nor what we shall be, we only know what we are.

The belief of a future state derives its greatest strength from the miseries of mankind; for it is natural that those who are wretched here, should console themselves with the hopes of happiness hereafter, and far be it from

me to rob any man of such consolation, without attempting to give him something in return. While such hope has the effect of soothing the afflicted, it cannot wholly be condemned ; yet it is much to be desired that men should derive their comfort from the exertion of their reason, rather than from the indulgence of their fancy, and either submit themselves patiently to the evils of their present lot, or endeavor to improve their condition by enlightening themselves and their fellow creatures. All enquiries into a future state have hitherto only produced tumult and confusion, for they who once possess themselves of a belief on such a subject, are jealous of having it disputed, and unwilling to suffer others to differ from them ; they have, therefore, constantly endeavored to enforce it by penalties and persecution, and kept the world in arms to support their opinion. Religion is a subject of too high a nature for the faculties and temper of man to be trusted with ; he must, therefore, content himself with what he sees established by the order of nature, and with the improvement which his faculties enable him to arrive at. The knowledge of his relations to his fellow creatures is the great object of his duty ; a knowledge of his relations to other beings he can

never acquire. To be just, temperate, affectionate, benevolent, and discreet, is the sum total of morality, and the sanction by which it is enforced, is the general happiness it produces even in the present world. To be inquisitive or fearful about another is the extremity of folly, for if there is another, it must be as little in our power as the present was before our existence; and yet some people think that the belief of future punishment has the happy effect of frightening men into virtue and morality. Poor and pitiful indeed must that man be who does not act from a superior motive, from the fear of shame, from a love of rectitude, or a regard for his fellow creatures. A rational man, under the pressure of the greatest calamity, tormented by distress or ill health, will console himself with the reflection that he lives under the dominion of an inevitable necessity; he will endeavor, by the exercise of his mental faculties, to act to the best of his judgment in whatever difficulties he is placed, and then, if he finds them insurmountable, he will wait with patience for relief in that state of nothingness from which he came, and to which he must return, "*where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest;*" where the happy

and the wretched, the oppressor and the oppressed, lie down together in eternal repose.— Dismissing, therefore, all ideas of a past or a future existence, and considering the one as impossible and the other improbable, let us examine the present state of man, and how he is circumstanced with regard to his physical and social state, and how far each is capable of being improved.

The natural state of man is so much meliorated by the arts of civilized life, that he has become almost another creature. Whether these arts have reached their utmost limit remains yet to be proved; hitherto they have enabled man to conquer many of the evils of nature, but many are yet to be subdued; whether he can ever subdue them, time alone will determine, but if we argue from what has been, to what may be, we must conclude that much yet remains before man has arrived at the utmost limit of improvement.

Man, in his physical and social capacity, is placed under the law of a rigid necessity, both in things external and in his own actions; the former he cannot control, but the latter allows the fullest exercise of his faculties; to himself, therefore, he seems to be free, and he is so, to act according to the motives which determine

his choice. The power of choosing to do one thing in preference to another appears to be free will, but in fact is necessity ; it is influenced by a motive.

Destruction is the first law of nature, and all things are kept in a state of perpetual rotation. Matter is continually taking different forms, tho' nothing is lost on the whole. The first propensity of children is to destroy whatever is in their power, and were not this propensity counteracted by the increase of their own reason, and the control of those around them, they would never arrive at maturity. Animals live by the destruction of each other, and men by the destruction of animals ; yet this extinction of matter is not real, but apparent. The same particles which form a human body, may in time be converted into air, and become the nourishment of plants ; some substances are longer in being dissolved than others, but all finally change their shape, and are converted into other shapes. It is this constant state of mutation which has given to man the idea of a creative power. That God, who is a spirit, created matter out of nothing, is more difficult to conceive than that matter has existed from eternity; for matter is real and tangible, and we are convinced of its ex-

istence by the evidence of our senses, but there is no evidence to prove the existence of spirit ; it is a mere creature of the mind, and therefore its creative power rests only on supposition. Nothing is created but in our imaginations ; all other things exist by an inherent necessity, and that necessity has neither beginning nor end. To create is to bring into existence something which never existed before, and where is the being in the universe endued with such a power.—Is it a spirit ?—What is a spirit ? Did it create itself ? How could it ? Is it matter ? How could dull, torpid matter bring itself into existence ?—That it exists and has existed from all eternity, is the only rational supposition by which we can account for its existence, but as we know nothing for certain, the less we say about it the better, for the subject exceeds the limits of our faculties.

The seeming waste of existence which pervades every part of the creation, cannot fail to excite the wonder and surprise of rational beings.—Millions of animals are born one day only to die the next, and millions more are born without arriving at maturity ; for what purpose this can have been intended, suits not our faculties to determine ; we can only say it does not accord

with our ideas of wisdom and benevolence.

The terraqueous globe has undoubtedly undergone many changes, and therefore, instead of supposing that there has been only one deluge, we are at liberty to suppose there may have been a hundred, for if such an event had not almost entirely destroyed the race of man, there is no reason can be given why we have no arts, no sciences, and nothing but a traditional account of the world, beyond that period. The supposition of some such calamity can alone account for the small extent of civilization, and allowing the eternity of matter, if there has been one, there may have been many preceding that, of which alone we have any account. The greater part of the known world remains at present in a state of barbarism, and even in those countries which are said to be civilized, the comforts of life are very sparingly distributed, which in general arises from the unequal and partial division of property, and the injustice of governments; but even were these adjusted upon the best and most equal principles, there still remains a great limit to improvement in the condition of man, from the tendency of population to increase beyond the means of subsistence. The principle of population, when

left unrestrained by other checks, is productive of vice and misery, and to restrain it properly we must submit to many privations ; the great art is to balance the two evils as nearly as possible, so as to avoid the greater misery. War, pestilence, and famine, are the natural correctives of a redundant population ; prudence and self-denial are the artificial checks which are administered by reason ; from hence it will appear that man can never be completely happy ; the most he can do is to mitigate the evils of his present state ; the only means afforded him of doing this is by the exercise of his reason, but as man is formed to imagine more than he can realise, he can never be happy to the utmost extent of his ideas. Imagination will always furnish something which can never be realised.

Tho' many of the evils of nature have been mitigated by a state of society, yet these are counterbalanced by many other evils almost equally great, so that the miseries of human life far outweigh its happiness. Many wants and diseases have been introduced which are unknown to the savage state, and the operations of nature are in many instances counteracted, restrained, and perverted ; health is often sacrificed to fashion, interest, or plea-

sure, and many suffer by hereditary diseases, so that life is rendered burdensome by a protracted state of misery. Men contrive to torment each other in various ways which are unknown in a more barbarous state of society ; the finest specimens of art, genius, and learning, are often purchased at a very dear rate, by those who produce them, from the envy of competitors, the neglect of the world, and the loss of health ; and even the ties of consanguinity are loosened by the collision of interests, so that the nearest relations are seldom the best friends.

The evils to which men are naturally subject may, however, be diminished by prudence and moderation, but the love of wealth tempts them to brave the violence of the elements, the dangers of climate, and even the certain destruction of pestilence; were men less eager to obtain wealth, or more careful of the lives of their fellow creatures, many of these evils might be avoided or lessened; it is not, however, merely the love of wealth that tempts men to these dangers, but even the necessity of a subsistence. The savage can procure himself a living in his own country by his bow or his sling, but civilized man, in order to satisfy the wants of nature in himself, and the

artificial wants of luxury in others, must subject himself to many unwholesome employments, to many perilous trades, and even to the certain loss of life. Here the savage has certainly an advantage over many of the lower ranks in civilized society, but neither state is devoid of its attendant evils; yet were men less ambitious, less avaricious, or less fond of luxuries, they might be content with many things which cannot be purchased without the misery or destruction of their fellow creatures. On the other hand, what is life? for it seems as if in the order of nature, that even a small portion of the luxuries and enjoyments which the world affords, could not be procured without the prodigal waste of it in many human beings. Nature does not seem to have set a very high value upon human existence, when so many are found requisite to be sacrificed to the luxury, or even the comfort, of a few; and every period of civilized society will bear testimony to the truth of the remark, for even the commonest article of use is not procured without the loss of many thousand lives in the employment. Sugar is an article notorious for the great consumption of human lives which it costs, and all commodities brought from foreign countries occasion the destruction of thousands

by shipwreck, by loss of health, and various calamities ; others are not even brought from the bowels of the earth without causing a very great mortality. Such calamities can never be wholly avoided in a state of society—a state so far preferable to the unsocial life of a savage, as to make these evils disappear, when it is considered how much comfort and pleasure they procure for the survivors. I only mean to say, that they may be in some degree lessened. In no one country, at any period of the world, have all, or even half the men of that country, arrived at that state of improvement and happiness for which by their nature and faculties they seem intended, or their soil and climate are capable of affording. The advantages of both have been wasted and squandered.

War, which has hitherto desolated the habitable globe, is common to both the natural and civilized state ; whether it is less destructive in the former or the latter, seems not hitherto to be determined, yet the fact is not to be disputed, that no nation of which we have any account has ever been at peace for thirty years together, tho' many have been at war for that period. War, therefore, seems the favorite employment of man, and as it is in some mea-

sure requisite to keep down a redundant population, it will probably never be entirely banished from the world; it certainly, however, gives us no very favorable opinion of a system in which it is an indispensable ingredient.

Man, in a savage state, is a totally independent being, he does every thing for himself; whereas the social man, from the highest to the lowest, is in different degrees dependent upon others for the supply of his wants, his pleasures, and his comforts; this difference is solely created by property. The pleasures of the savage are simple, almost to monotony, and inseparably connected with his wants, while those of society are factitious and varied in infinite degrees; yet there are some which, to the disgrace of civilization, partake in a great degree of savage ignorance and ferocity, and it is not too much to say, that the generality of mankind reject the refinement which society places within their reach. The lower ranks of people in all countries are little better than savages in their manners, their minds, and tempers. Connected with society only by the wants of their superiors, and restrained from plunder and rapine only by the pressure of authority, they seem to be tied to those above them by the force of law, rather than

united by a community of interest; while this continues to be the case, civilization is not complete, and society is rather a forced union than a friendly compact. Men are by nature savages. *Homo homini lupus*, well describes the species—for tho' somewhat tamed by society and education, we are impelled by nature to prey upon each other, in a savage state literally, for there are yet *anthropophagi*, or men eaters; in a civilized state we prey upon each others property and comfort. So far we harmonize with the rest of the creation, for all living creatures live by the destruction of life either animal or vegetable. And yet such is the power of education, that it is capable almost of changing the nature of man.

Equality of property is by no means the indispensable cement of society—it is directly the reverse, for its tendency seems rather to create a savage independence, concentrating each man in himself, than to establish a state of general exertion arising from reciprocity of interest. When every man is sufficient for himself, he has no need of the aid of others; but the variety of our wants and pleasures brings men together into a state of mutual dependence and general harmony. The most desirable period of society is that in which

nature, corrected and improved, is the foundation of our habits, pleasures, and institutions; for tho' the social man is almost a factitious animal, it is possible for him to unite a regard for the simple dictates of nature, with the pleasure derived from the utmost exertions of art. When nature is entirely abandoned, and every valuable propensity which she implants is sacrificed to the prevalence of fashion, or to the influence of whim and caprice, man is no longer in a state to enjoy the happiness of which he is capable; but becomes from that moment the slave of others, and of his own vanity, presumption, and ignorance. He adopts a mode of living which is utterly inconsistent with every end and purpose of a rational being, and perverts the first great object of society, which is mutual comfort and general improvement. To live agreeably to nature, without despising the conveniences of art, is to unite the natural and the civilized state as far as they are capable of coalescing together, and seems to promise a degree of improvement equal to the highest excellence of our nature.

Longevity, simply considered, is not a desirable possession. To extend a mere existence, or a life of disease, is not be wished for,

by any rational being ; yet such is the nature of man, that it requires an uncommon degree of misery to conquer the love of life—a propensity which is beneficial to the species, tho' not to the individual. To prolong a life that is useful and pleasant, is one of the best gifts of nature, of fortune, or of prudence, but certainly one of the rarest, for the best and most estimable of mankind have generally the worst constitutions, and can hardly, by the most rigid self-denial, extend their term to the common length of human existence. On the other hand, there are some, who, by their internal strength and vigor, defy even vice and intemperance for a very long period. The constitution of our bodies generally depends upon our parents ; it is therefore fortunate for the greater part of mankind, that those who lead the most intemperate lives, beget their children before their vices have taken such hold upon their constitution as to propagate disease ; but in other instances, which too frequently happen, hereditary malady, united to personal imprudence, adds to the general stock of disease and misery, which deforms the fair face of civilized society. The longevity of the savage is more rare than that of the social man ; the inclemency of the seasons, the violence of

climate, and the alternate extremes of labor and repose, exhaust his natural strength at an early period. Moderation in all things is the law of enjoyment, and therefore those of the lower ranks of society who are moderately fed, and use moderate exertion, or even those who lead a life of hard labor, generally live the longest, and those who live in a cold climate more so than those of a hotter; yet, in all climates, those who are free from the corruption of hereditary disease, and live according to the rigid rules of morality and prudence, stand the best chance for longevity. The pains and pleasures of the savage are few, he is therefore little in the power of fortune, and is chiefly affected by the elements; the relations of civil life create a variety of pleasures, but they also bring with them an infinity of troubles. The loss of friends, the collisions of interest, the attacks of disease, are all considerable diminutions of the comforts afforded by civilization. Suffering is the lot of every human being, in different degrees and proportions.

The operations of nature and the actions of men are nothing more than certain causes producing certain effects by an inevitable necessity. Man may murmur, but he must submit

to a disposition of things the most apparently unjust; he must submit to see virtue insulted and degraded, while vice and folly are triumphant; to see youth, beauty, and talents sink into the grave, while age and decrepitude live to torment and be tormented; to see money heaped upon the worthless, and the worthy oppressed by poverty; all this happens in the regular course of things, but to whom it happens is the effect of chance. I have suffered much from the delicacy of my own feelings, and the want of feeling in others. The idea of nations and individuals being punished for their actions, arises from that barbarous theology which represents the Deity as a revengeful and malicious being, who delights in the sufferings of those whom he has created, and hardens merely to punish. It is a narrow, bigoted, and illiberal sentiment, the remnant of Jewish divinity, and unworthy of Christians or rational beings; for, philosophically speaking, all the events of the world are but the result of natural causes, into whose origin we are not able to penetrate. Let those, therefore, who pronounce thus harshly on the measures of a being whose nature they are unable to comprehend, be taught humility and submission from the consideration of their limited faculties, and for-

bear to judge decisively where they are not supplied with the means of decision. The purposes for which the events of the world are established can never be known by human nature,—they are infinitely beyond our reach; all systems, therefore, which pretend to account for what cannot be accounted for, are defective in this material particular, that there is a limit to their researches which they cannot pass, and therefore they only wander in folly when they attempt to explain what can never be developed. And yet no man who looks at the history of the world, either in past or present times, can deny that it has been and is a vast theatre of crimes, of murders, massacres, usurpations, and intrigues, occasioned by the passions of mankind. Who then will say that it is governed by a Being infinitely wise and benevolent? A Being who causes so much evil cannot be both wise and good. Divines tell us that God does not cause these things, he only permits them; this is a distinction without a difference. Humanly speaking, the misfortunes of mankind are the effects of their own imprudence, philosophically speaking, they are the result of an inevitable necessity, for one course of action naturally leads to virtue and happiness, and another to vice and

misery, and these are the result of just or false calculations, which are founded on the immutable and eternal relation of things.

Mankind, in their various stations, act from a variety of motives, and he who is actuated by the most worthy, will eventually do the most good to himself and to society. There are many substitutes for virtue which are sufficient for the common purposes of life, and the generality of mankind; the restraints of law, the force of opinion, the prevalence of custom, the love of reputation, and even the forms of honor, supply the place of virtue, so as to keep society together. Virtue, or the love of rectitude, is the only satisfactory motive, and the only means of rendering mankind completely happy, but happiness does not seem to have been the end for which the universe was formed, yet in all creatures the desire of it is strongly implanted, and this desire engages man, above all others, in a constant struggle with the evils of nature and of society. Man cares a great deal about Nature, but Nature cares very little about man, she torments him in various ways while living, and finally puts an end to his existence. The highest excellence which he seems intended to arrive at, is an almost unlimited improvement in knowledge, and so far as this confers happiness, he

may be happy; but it is a sort of happiness which consists more in the pursuit than in the acquisition; whether a future life will confer on him more substantial bliss, he never can determine; it seems a sort of Pisgah prospect, which he can enjoy only by the force of imagination. Nature, we are told, has intended all things for the best, but it must be allowed, that she has given to the generality of men no very valuable present when she gave them existence, and that those who are unhappy without any fault of their own, have a right to complain of injustice and cruelty. The existence of one miserable being in the world, is an invincible argument against the belief of a Deity, infinitely wise and benevolent. The laws of Nature are either fixed and invariable, or they are dependent on the will of a capricious Being—if that Being is not capricious, then his will is in conformity to the laws of Nature, and Nature and God are one. Man may conceive the existence of an independent Being, but he can never prove it. To create the world from nothing, is more inconceivable than that it has existed from eternity.

Tho' the evils of life must be severely felt by men in all stations, and by some more than others, there are not wanting arguments of

great weight to reconcile us to their pressure, independent of any religious consideration ; of all these the most powerful is their inevitable necessity; for such is the nature of man, that we readily acquiesce in whatever we persuade ourselves is without a remedy, or happens to us independent of our own conduct.* Much consolation may also be derived from seeing that our lot is not singular, but that all are subject to calamity, and that many suffer more severely than ourselves. It also is no small comfort to have it in our power to think, that whatever may befall us, we have done our utmost to make others happy ; and that tho' we have failed in acquiring happiness ourselves, we have not contributed to make the world worse than we found it, but have increased the general sum of virtue and knowledge ; and tho' we should not presume to consider ourselves more than mere mechanical agents, composing part of an immense universe, we at least may rejoice that we have been instruments of good, for the promotion of happiness and morality. By reasoning thus, we are more like rational beings than by flying for consolation to the

* Sors est sua cuique ferenda.

hope of uncertain futurity ; but whether we are religious, or whether we are merely moral, does not depend on ourselves ; the consolations and the terrors of religion are not in our own power and arise from circumstances, over which we have no control, they are more the result of imagination than of reason, but at any rate they are no more of our making, than we are the makers of ourselves— God, is said to be an un-created Being, but all the world is uncreated, and has to my idea existed from all eternity.— The operations of nature in some instances produce good, and in others evil, and therefore cannot proceed from infinite benevolence. The instinct of animals is said to be an admirable proof of divine wisdom, but it is no more so, than that fire should burn, or water quench it. The formation of the human body shews a wonderful adaptation of different parts to different useful ends, but they are as well adapted to produce pain when out of order, as pleasure when they perform their functions. The formation of stones in the kidneys and gall bladder, tends immediately to the production of exquisite pain, from the smallness of the passages thro' which they are forced—therefore to argue for the wisdom of providence from what is good, and neglect to consider what is defective,

is a very partial mode of reasoning. All that can be said with safety on this subject is, that the universe is sufficient to excite the wonder and admiration of man, and when I am asked who made it, my answer is, "I cannot tell."

Men are not what they seem any more than women, and the generous savage, unaccustomed to represent things otherwise than as they are, starts with surprise at the deceptions which men practise on each other; for such is the sophisticated state of civilized life, that no man is to be believed for his words, but rather to be suspected of intending the contrary to all that he professes. The world is full of fraud, deceit, and selfishness, and he who wishes to acquire any tolerable share of its comforts must be constantly on his guard against the arts of his competitors, and he who is born to hereditary wealth must be equally careful. Health and reputation are the most valuable possessions, but money is not to be despised, and he who neglects to acquire or preserve it, must not wonder if he is neglected. The world cares very little about individuals, individuals therefore must take care of themselves, and if they wish to be respected, must study to acquire those things which will always ensure respect, viz.—character and money.

LIBERTY AND NECESSITY.

AMONG the many difficulties in the doctrines of religion, which have put faith and reason at variance, and puzzled even the most determined believers, that of reconciling the foreknowledge of God, with the free will of man is, without doubt, the most troublesome. Divines, philosophers, and poets, have tried to remove it, again and again, and left it just where they begun; some honestly confessing that the narrowness of our comprehension is not equal to the difficulty, but that, no doubt, it will be cleared up to us in a future state, that is to say, when it will be of no use to us, if it is any thing more than a mere speculative enquiry. To cut the knot which cannot be untied, is a concise mode of arguing, not much suited to the inquisitive spirit of the present times, and savors, perhaps, a little of the arbitrary decisions of former ages, when men who

could not give a reason for a thing, contented themselves with assuming the point in dispute, and thus silencing all argument by saying, “It is so ; but why, I do not know.” On this subject I will imitate the laconic brevity of former disputants, but will not content myself with merely giving an answer; I will endeavour to find some reasons to support my opinion. I answer, “It is not so, and I will tell you why :” foreknowledge and free will *cannot* exist together, and to maintain it is just as ridiculous as to say that two and two make five, or that two opposite signs in algebra do not destroy each other. If there is such a being as an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent Deity, who created the universe, there cannot be in that universe any other being who has the power to act freely and independently ; for if God is omniscient he must know every action of man before it is performed ; if he is omnipotent, no being can have a power of doing any action contrary to his will ; for if he could, such a being would in that instance be his superior ; his omnipresence is only a consequence of the two former attributes. But if there is no such being as God in the world, then some men think that we must be free.—What do they mean by free ? Free to act

without rule and control? There can be no such thing. The material world we see is governed by fixed and invariable laws, and is the mind of man less subject to restraint? Are there no rules by which the conduct of rational beings is regulated? No such things as motives by which a man is impelled to choose one thing in preference to another?

Supposing the world to be governed by a supreme intelligent Being, let us enquire whether he acts by fixed or variable laws, whether by a general or a particular Providence. To imagine that the Maker of the universe (if such a being exists independent of matter), either did not, or could not, foresee, when he formed it, every possible contingency, and that he did not so dispose the laws of matter and mind as to produce the effects he intended, without the necessity of perpetual interference, is to derogate from his wisdom and his power; it is a doctrine which must have originated from a very little mind, but has been believed by many great ones, and being the doctrine of the English church, has found many advocates among men of the first-rate talents, but all the talents in the world are not sufficient to make it credible with any one who considers it as applied to God instead of man;

to the one it is degrading and insulting, to the
to the other it is flattering and consolatory.
The heathens personified these imaginary in-
terferences, and had divinities for every place
and every circumstance; and this is the whole
secret of the heathen mythology, it is a per-
sonification of human qualities, of the opera-
tions of nature, or the events of the world.
Minerva is wisdom, Æolus is wind, Mars is
war, Saturn is time, which eats up its own
children, and Jupiter is the air, and he (as
well as all the other gods), is subject to Fate
or Necessity, which is considered as unalter-
able, and inexorable. Moses, the first law-
giver, who ever ventured to promulgate the
unity of the Deity, laid claim to his particular
protection for the nation of the Jews, in ex-
clusion of all the rest of mankind, and no
doubt the success and continuance of his reli-
gion and laws is principally owing to this pious
fraud ; but every page of his writings which
makes the Deity a party to the massacres and
murders of the Jewish nation, which supposes
him to reject and harden other nations or indi-
viduals, is inconsistent with those ideas which
we form of an omnipotent and benevolent ruler
of the universe. And yet every part of the
Jewish and Christian religions supposes the

interference of a particular Providence, because each of them lays claim to a particular revelation. They may indeed, in one sense, be said to come from God, and so do plagues, pestilence, and famine; they are parts of the general system, but as to their being particular interpositions, to the exclusion of other religions, or other nations, the idea is impious and ridiculous, and nothing but the narrow sectarian spirit of bigotry could have countenanced and supported such a belief. Are the Persians or the Chinese less the creatures of the Deity than the Jews or the Christians? If he did not communicate to them the means of obtaining his favor, will he punish them for not believing what they had no opportunities of knowing? If he does not punish them, where is the use or benefit of these revelations? And if he only rewards them according to their knowledge, is he not partial in the distribution of his kindness? The notion of a particular Providence then, as it relates to nations, is blasphemous, and not less so with regard to individuals. To suppose that the Deity suffers a man to be brought into a difficulty, and then steps in to help him out, is little less than ludicrous; yet we have been seriously told, that such a man was saved from shipwreck, storm, or fire, by a

particular interposition of Providence. The very words are a contradiction to each other, for Providence comes from the Latin word *provideo*, which signifies to foresee, in the limited sense as applied to men; but in its higher application to the Divinity, means to foresee every thing; now if the Deity foresaw the man's falling into the difficulty, he must, without doubt, have foreseen the means of extricating him, and have produced both by a regular train of causes and effects, or his knowledge and his power are limited. In all those instances of sudden preservation, the attention of observers is caught by the nearness between danger and death, and that seems to be something more than natural, which is nothing but the operation of cause and effect, and if they will but allow that it is not miraculous, the wonder ceases; for that one man should be saved in a shipwreck, by laying hold of a plank, requires no further interposition of Providence, than that the rest should be drowned, if the plank could save but one; if it had saved a hundred, then he might be said to have interfered, and to have worked a miracle, for such is the only meaning, which we ought to give to a particular Providence.

That the Deity, every now and then, interposes in human affairs, that he favors particular

sects and nations, and that he hardens the hearts of some that he may shew the greater kindness to others, is a notion which could have originated only from a weak or an artful mind ; yet such has, in most ages, been the opinion of mankind, derived not, indeed, from the free exercise of reason, but the arbitrary control of a few individuals, who have, in all nations, directed the public opinion for their own interested ends, and caused it to be believed that the government of the world is only a government of expedients, and that the Deity continually interposes his power for private and particular purposes. Even supposing the universe to be governed by an omnipotent and omniscient Being, the existence of such a Being is incompatible with human liberty, and if there is no such Being independent of Matter, the supposition is equally untenable.

If the laws which regulate matter are fixed and invariable, why are not those of mind, supposing them to result from the same organization, and if this be allowed, then it follows that there is no such thing as liberty opposed to these laws, and that we seem to be free only because we have the power to deliberate, but that our choice is constantly influenced by a motive, and that motive by a series of causes

which are lost in eternity, as a watch appears to go by itself, till we understand the mechanism by which it is put in motion. To this opinion many and powerful objections will doubtless be raised; first it will be said to strike at the root of all morality, by inducing men to believe that as they have not the power to avoid doing evil, they may indulge themselves in every species of wickedness. Are there none who do this without believing in necessity? and may not men equally believe themselves impelled to do good? The fallacy of this argument lies in not giving the opposite opinion its full extent, for the principles of morality, which are either implanted by nature or acquired by imitation and habit, are as much a part of the general system of the moral world, as those propensities and temptations to vice which seduce or impel others, and no motive can operate upon man which is not the result of natural causes; therefore we are just as safe from the dangers of vice under the belief of necessity, as if every man believed himself a free agent. Next it will be said, that every man's own feelings are a direct contradiction to the belief of his actions not being free; "we know," says some one, "that every action we perform is either the result of deliberation or

perform is either the result of deliberation or of a violent temptation, but in both these cases we feel that the mind is equally free :" True it is that we seem to have the power of choosing, because when two things are proposed to us, we must take the one or the other, and at one period of time they seemed indifferent, and even after our choice, we think we had the power to have chosen the reverse ; but this is fallacious, for we acted from the motive which was strongest at the time, and that motive was only the result of impressions, which arise as much from the mechanism of the mind, as seeing does from that of the eye ; these motives impelled us to act, as much as the heavier weight inclines the balance ; so that we might just as well say we might have acted differently, as say that if the lighter weight had been the heavier it would have turned the balance. As to actions that are trifling, the power to deliberate is so frequently exercised, that in time it ceases to be perceived ; in these we seem to act with a greater degree of freedom, but in reality there is not the least difference. Popularly speaking, we are moral and accountable agents, actuated by motives and governed by hopes and fears, but philosophically speaking, we are mere machines, im-

elled by a power of which we have no knowledge, nor even any conception. It suits very well, the loose and gross ideas of the vulgar, to personify that power and call it God, but men of deeper reflection consider the whole universe but as one immense machine, which is self-existent and has existed from all eternity. To examine this matter accurately, let us ask what is this mighty independent faculty which puts us out of the power of Nature, subjects the world to our dominion, and futurity to our choice? A mere operation of the mind exercised upon the objects of perception or sense; for what more is the will? and if the mind is a part of the universal system, its operations must be subject to the general laws of matter. According to the system of necessity, vice is no more in our own power, than virtue; we act in both cases under the impressions which certain objects make upon our senses, and these senses move our desires, desires operate on the will, and the will produces the action: the rectitude or depravity of any man's conduct, therefore, depends on the impressions which he receives in his youth; for these impressions, frequently repeated, become habits, and form the character of the man: hence will be seen the necessity of a virtuous education. Let no

man be alarmed at the idea of his being a mere machine, for at any rate he is not of his own making, and, therefore, has no more right to claim a liberty of action, than the right of making himself; he can do nothing which is not intended by a superior power, and, therefore, he need not fear being impelled to vice by an irresistible propensity, for if such is the will of Providence, it is not in his power to resist, tho' he may suffer for his imprudence: I will not venture to maintain, that whatever is, is right, but I will affirm, that it cannot be otherwise than it is. The origin of our errors seems to be in the doctrine of a future state, for if the mind of man is not free, he cannot be the subject of reward or punishment; but this doctrine, invented and supported by priests and legislators to keep men in subjection to their power, having been established long before men began to think of themselves or the world around them, they united foreknowledge or the established order of things with free will, which if they had reasoned more accurately, they would have found could not exist together.

From all that has been said, it must follow that Nature or God, or whatever it is that keeps the world in motion, does not act by

partial and temporary laws, that his government is not a government of expedients, for unforeseen occasions, and that we are mere agents of a superior power. To what consequence does this doctrine lead? To nothing worse than that we are subject to a fixed and invariable principle by which the world from all eternity has been regulated, and if it is right that one man should be vicious and another virtuous, it is so disposed because it could not be otherwise, and we can no more disturb the order of the universe than a mite or a snail. Let us then submit with resignation to the state of things which is established, from a consciousness of its inevitable necessity; this does not forbid the exercise of human virtues or wisdom, nor can it prevent or increase the operation of vice, for both are parts of the same system. Men whose delicacy, or whose piety, is shocked at the idea of making what they please to call God the author of evil, are forced to vindicate his goodness, at the expence of his power, and raising up another, or a rival power, whom they term the Devil, make him the cause of all moral evil, while God is only the author of good. A notion so childish could have originated only in the infancy of the world, when men never reasoned on the nature

of things, but believed implicitly all they were told, and when priests were the only repositories of knowledge, and knowledge was derived from any thing but reasoning and experience.— Should these opinions be true, they can do no harm ; if false, not more than others have which are yet believed ; but it is expected, probably, that they should be shewn capable to produce good. First, then, they strike at the root of all bigotry and superstition, regarding all systems of religion as the invention of men, they teach resignation to the events of the world, as the result of an inevitable necessity, but while they enforce resignation, they by no means prevent exertion. We are as much formed to submit to tyranny at one time, as to resist at another ; one man is born to create corruptions, and another to remove them ; Martin Luther was as much an instrument in the hand of Fate as Gregory the Great, or Innocent II.— Finally, these opinions limit the virtues or the exertions of man no farther than they are limited by our nature, and as they teach us that every action of our lives, and every event of the world, is the result of an established order of things, they tend to make us more truly moral than any system of superstition, which, by continually calling the attention to

its pretended author or to external ceremonies, withdraws our thoughts from the practice of virtue, and substitutes faith for morality. It is impossible for us to say what we are commanded or what we are forbidden to do by necessity, therefore we have no business to enquire, we have only to enquire how far the general interest agrees with our own. Men who believe in a God, too often take upon them to interpret his will; they say that God hardens men's hearts, that he punishes nations and individuals, and that he visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. When considered as the operation of natural causes and effects, these opinions can do no harm; but when pretending to proceed from a knowledge of the divine will, they are convenient instruments for fraud and villainy to work with upon human credulity, and tend to keep mankind in subjection to a gross and degrading superstition. The idea of a God endowed with human passions and feelings, as the God of every religion is, is the most complete bar to human improvement that could have been conceived—because when men make their own minds the standard of the Deity, and imagine that Being all excellent to whom they attribute the lowest of human infirmities, those infirmities will con-

stantly find an apology in the conduct of a "jealous God,"* a God of vengeance,† and a God that makes the innocent suffer the punishment of the guilty.‡ All ideas of a God derived from human nature are degrading and ridiculous, and my reason will not suffer me for a moment to believe in such a Being. If by a God is meant that vital spirit, that active principle, which moves the whole mass of matter, God is the *anima mundi*, or soul of the world—that I understand, but if by the term God is meant a spiritual Being, distinct from matter, endowed with human faculties to an infinite extent, that I cannot understand, and therefore cannot believe.

* Exod. 20. v. 5.—† Deut. 32. Rom. 12. v. 19.—‡ Rom. 5. v. 8, 9, 10.
v. Strabo, lib. 7. p. 457. Ed. 1707.

REMARKS ON THE
BIBLE SOCIETIES.

IN committing this part of my Book to the public, which contains a direct attack upon the divine authority of the scriptures, I feel that I am liable to some small risque of adding another martyr to the cause of truth, and I have a recent example of persecution before my eyes, sufficient to terrify men of stouter nerves than myself; but I cannot, I will not believe that at this enlightened period it can be considered criminal to discuss the merits of a book, by some held sacred, provided the discussion be conducted with decency and moderation. Even were the utmost scurrility, vulgarity, and abuse employed to render it contemptible, surely they who are convinced of its divine origin, can never fear the use of any *human* means to degrade it in the eyes of the world—for if the arguments by which it is assailed are unsound, they may be repelled

by sounder arguments, and as to abuse if it ever does harm, it can only be for a season, and will ultimately recoil upon those who employ it. At any rate, if the religion I have proposed to examine, is from God, no effort of mine, nor of any other man can destroy it, for God will defend his own with a power which no human efforts can successfully oppose. Man may be strong, but God must be stronger; and according to the heathen maxim, *Fate is strongest of all.*—The progress of toleration within the last fifty years has been wonderful, all sects are permitted to exercise and to propagate their opinions with impunity, and even infidelity is not wholly proscribed.—A less period than fifty years, I trust, will give to infidels of all descriptions the utmost liberty to profess their opinions. Religion may suffer from such a toleration, but morality can never suffer from the utmost freedom of discussion, for morality is founded on the common interest of mankind, which will always prove its best protection; and even Christianity, so far as it is practicable, whatever may become of its doctrines, will maintain itself as a rule of conduct while it is found consistent with general utility; but to give it a fair trial, it must have no external support from fear or interest.—

The sole motive by which I have been actuated in this and all my other writings against Christianity, is to make men more reasonable ; and surely no one can be a greater benefactor to his species than he who teaches them to exercise their reason. Implicit belief is the parent and preserver of error, and what is most extraordinary, it generally assumes the appearance of reason ; for men oftener employ that faculty to defend their belief than to examine it, there is, therefore, no greater bar to the improvement of reason, than the restraints laid upon it by religion.

The religious world has for some time been divided by two projects, each of a two-fold nature, and also by the renewed exertions of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, so much has Christianity always tended to keep men in a state of division.—The Old and New Bible Societies, and the Schools of Bell and Lancaster, have cost the public rivers of ink, and reams of paper, but happily as yet, no blood has been shed in their cause. Thanks to the spirit of philosophy ! for Christianity cannot claim the merit of this fact, because she has already deluged the world with blood, thro' the contentions of her different sects and parties. The utility of the

different Societies above alluded to, must of course depend on the merit of the books they wish to disseminate. I have therefore thought it worth while to examine the contents of the Bible and the Prayer Book somewhat in detail; and I must premise, that tho' I have long ceased to consider the former as a book containing a divine revelation, I by no means deny that it is a book of considerable merit, and were it properly abridged, or even as it is, were it circulated only as a book of Hebrew mythology, history, and morality, it could not be read without considerable advantage to all ranks, but when put into the hands of the people as a book divinely inspired, and containing the will of a supreme Being, it is capable of producing, and has produced, considerable mischief in the world, because it represents that Being in colors the most odious and disgusting, as cruel, implacable, and revengeful, subject to more than human weakness, and actuated by more than human resentment. The Bible is a fruitful source of imposture and folly; it is impossible to enumerate all the sects which have originated from it, they are almost as numerous as the letters of the book, and are all at variance with common sense and reason. Every day

produces some new heresy, and, therefore, I have no hesitation in saying, and I will omit no effort to prove, that before the Bible can be of any extensive use to mankind, it must be divested of its divine pretensions, and received as a mere human composition. I will therefore attempt to shew that it cannot be a divine revelation; for in order to prove the truth of a revelation, we must first prove the existence and nature of that Being by whom it is revealed, and secondly, that it contains things contrary to reason and experience. With the first of these propositions I have nothing to do at present. I am not bound to prove the nature of God, I need only assert that according to the deductions of reason employed on this subject, we conceive God to be endowed with all the attributes of wisdom, dignity, and power, which can possibly exist in any uncreated Being, and by this test I will attempt to disprove the pretensions of the Jewish religion, as contained in the Pentateuch, to be a divine revelation. The first fact related in the Bible, viz. the creation of the world, abounds with so many contradictions, and impossibilities, that it cannot contain a true recital of that which it pretends. In the first chapter of Genesis, v. 3. we are told that God said, " Let there be light, and there

was light," and in v. 5. we are told that this happened on the first day; yet v. 16 tells us that on the fifth day God created the sun. Now if the sun is the cause of light, then there could be no light before the sun was created, and therefore these two verses are in direct contradiction to each other, or day must arise from some other cause than the sun, for God called the light day, before he had created that which distinguishes day from night. The sixth and seventh verses are so exactly conformable to things as they seem to be, and so much the reverse of what they really are, that no man inspired by divine wisdom could have written them. The idea of a firmament dividing the water, is such as would strike an ignorant observer on looking above and below him; he sees in the one, what he takes to be a real substance, studded with luminous bodies, and from whence he imagines the rain and other vapours descend, and he imagines also a place above the firmament which he calls heaven; below him he sees several great expanses of water, which he conceives to be augmented or rather caused by the water above—and yet these things are not what they seem; for an attentive observer of nature, even without any astronomical knowledge, will easily perceive that the blue ex-

panse, which he once imagined to be a solid body, is nothing more than the immensity of space, which being totally colorless, seems to be blue only as contrasted to other objects--and that the rain, &c. which seem to descend from the sky, come from no greater height than the clouds, which are condensed vapors drawn from the earth—and as to any such place as heaven above the earth, it exists only in imagination ; because this earth and the atmosphere which surrounds it are but parts, and not one millionth part of the whole planetary system. The 26th, 27th, and 28th verses tell us that God created man in his own image, from whence we are to infer that God has a bodily form like man ; an idea which degrades the dignity of the Supreme Being, tho' it exalts that of his creatures, and therefore it is more reasonable to suppose that man formed God after his own imagination.

The reason and the senses of man enable him to comprehend the operation of secondary causes, or the visible works of nature ; he is therefore led by curiosity, the result of his reasoning powers, to imagine that he can find out the cause of nature itself, a search in which he generally bewilders, without enlightening his mind; hence it is that different nations

at different periods of the world, have attributed the origin of all things to different causes, and worshipped different objects as so many different gods. The most ancient belief among all uncivilized nations, is that of Sabæism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies. The Jews are the first nation who believed only in one God and gave him a bodily form, but that opinion is not less ridiculous than the follies of Paganism. To return to the Pantateuch, it is said in verse 27th, that on the sixth day "God created man in his own image, male and female created he them," in chapter ii. v. 5, the author tells us that after God had finished all his work and rested on the seventh day, he found out that there was not a man to till the earth, so he formed him out of the dust, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life—he then formed a garden in which he placed the man, and gave it him to till and to enjoy, but he found that he had not done enough for him, for he had no partner of his labor and his joy, and so v. 18, "God said it is not good for man to be alone, I will make an help meet for him," and from the following verses it seems that God threw the man into a deep sleep, and took out one of his ribs of which he made a woman, and brought her to the man. Now let

me ask any impartial person if it is possible that any author divinely inspired should have written any thing so grossly inconsistent and contradictory as these two stories of the formation of man and woman, and let me also ask the ablest divine to account, even humanly speaking, for so obviously erroneous and ridiculous a narrative. Various have been the attempts to give a rational interpretation of the 3d chapter of Genesis, which contains the history of the temptation of Adam and Eve, and their subsequent banishment from Paradise. Some have considered it as an allegory, and some have taken it literally; the former is probable, but the latter is utterly impossible, for so taken it would degrade the Being whom it is the object of Moses to represent as the maker of the universe, into the humble occupation of a taylor, because verse 21 says, that "unto Adam and his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them," and verse 24, represents the same Being as a cutler, for it says, "he placed a cherubim with a flaming sword, which turned every way to guard the tree of life," now if there are swords in heaven, who could make them but God? All this is impossible, and therefore we can make nothing more of the passage than to suppose it an alle-

gory to represent the evils brought upon mankind by the principle of population, compared with the fruitfulness, or rather unfruitfulness of the earth, for sorrow is denounced to the woman as the mother of children, and labor to the man as the tiller of the ground, and the first fruit of their union was the murder of Abel by his brother Cain, an example which has been followed in every succeeding generation. The fifth chapter of Genesis gives an account of the age of those men who are called Patriarchs, which as it is utterly inconsistent with every other account of the early ages of the world, must have arisen from some mistake, occasioned by our ignorance of the Hebrew, a language very little understood, even by those who took upon them to give the Bible in an English Translation, and much less by those who are now its authorized interpreters. The sixth chapter of Genesis contains hardly one word at which a rational believer in the Deity ought not to shudder, as utterly inconsistent with all the ideas which our reason teaches us to form of a Being so dignified and exalted; v. 6th, tells us, that "God repented that he had made man, and that it grieved him at the heart," and in v. 7th, he takes the barbarous resolution "to

destroy man from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air." Supposing that man had offended his Creator (an idea utterly inconsistent with his omnipotence), what could the birds and beasts have done to excite his indignation? How any sensible man, not blinded by religion, can suffer himself to conceive any thing so unworthy of the Deity is hardly credible; indeed the whole story of the flood is to be accounted for only by supposing it written by some one who had formed the supreme Being completely like himself, subject to all the passions and weaknesses of human nature; for he even goes so far as to degrade the Maker of the universe to the occupation of a ship builder, when he gives Noah directions about the form of the ark. It is an endless and almost a useless labor to examine all the ridiculous passages of the Pentateuch, one more fact with regard to the deluge will be sufficient to shew that if such an event as a general overflowing ever happened, the intercourse and conversation between Noah and the Creator of the universe is utterly impossible, because a fact arising from natural causes, is related as a supernatural demonstration given by the Deity of his re-

solution to destroy the world no more by a deluge, and this fact must have existed from the creation of the world. If there was rain before the deluge, there must have been rainbows, and if so, how could that be regarded as a novelty? The story is evidently a fable, intended to account for the present state of the globe, and tho' it is possible and even probable, that there may have been a general deluge (partial inundations of considerable extent, we are certain there were), yet the story of Noah and his ark is so improbable as to deserve no credit with any man who possesses an understanding beyond that of a child.— Supposing that the account of the conversation is only figurative, and that God did not actually condescend to give the minute directions recorded in the sixth and seventh chapters of Genesis, how is it possible that one man and his family could, on one single spot, collect all the animals of the world together, or that any vessel they could build, could be large enough to contain so great a number? Besides, we are told in the seventh chapter, v. 23, “That every living substance upon the face of the earth was destroyed.” It is also worthy of remark, that when Noah came out of the ark, he sacrificed of every clean beast unto the

Lord, and the Lord smelled a sweet savor, long before the distinction between clean and unclean beasts was established, by the eleventh chapter of Leviticus. It seems that Noah, who first cultivated the vine, like the Bacchus of the heathens, first taught the abuse of it; and when hardly awake from the effects of his intoxication, he cursed his grandson Canaan and all his posterity, not for his own fault, but for that of his father, who had seen the old man's nakedness while he lay asleep. What must we think of the Deity, who could fulfil such a curse? Surely he is not the God of the Christians, who could punish the innocent for the guilty. Of this Noah we are told that he lived to be nine hundred and fifty years old.—Believe it who will, I believe it not.

The difference of languages is one of those unsearchable facts, for which the book of Genesis pretends to account, in a mode the most improbable that could have been imagined; it tells us, that a number of men had formed the impious design of building a tower whose top might reach to heaven, *Gen.* chap. xi. verse 4. Now it is well known that according to the acknowledged system of the universe, there are no such places as heaven and hell; for there is nothing below the earth but minerals, and

nothing above it but air, and that as the universe is composed of many worlds, which are suns, moons, and stars to each other, where the atmosphere of one world begins, that of another ends; no man, therefore, who believes in the Newtonian system, can believe in a material heaven and hell, the actual residence either of bodies or spirits. The hell or heaven of every man is his own breast; the evil which he does is his only Devil, and the good he does, his only God. To build a tower to heaven might have been attempted by men who believed in heaven, above the clouds, but that heaven could not have been believed in by any man divinely inspired, because the effect of such inspiration must have been to enlighten him as to the true state of things, and not to accommodate itself to his errors and false conceptions. The most material objection to this account of the diversity of language is, that it does not perform what it promises, because had they all continued to speak one language, it would not have enabled them to complete what they had intended, nor could they otherwise have performed it, would they have been restrained by a diversity of languages, considering how easily languages are learnt, and how little occasion there was

for language in such an operation as that of building a tower?

The whole story of Abraham is so little consonant either with Jewish or Christian morality, that the writer of the book of Genesis must have known little of the religion of nature, on which both of these are founded. The first we hear about Abram is the barrenness of his wife, and yet by means of that wife he was to become the father of the Jewish nation. The Jewish religion commences with the selection of Abram as the chosen servant of God; whether that selection actually took place, or was the invention of after times, must be a matter very difficult for those to determine who read the Bible with the prepossessions of their youth, but to those who enjoy the free exercise of their reason, it is no more to be believed than the stories in the Arabian Nights; first, because it relates things miraculous and improbable; and secondly, because these things are not to be found in any other book. As Moses is allowed to be the author of all the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion, there is every reason to believe that having adopted the traditions of his ancestors, he invented stories to support these traditions, and the ceremonies which he afterwards im-

posed on that singular nation. That circumcision was practised among the Jews before the time of Moses is not to be doubted, because there existed a physical reason for it in all hot countries; but that God actually spoke to Abram, and said, "Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years, and that nation whom they shall serve I will judge, and afterwards they shall come out with great substance, and thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, and in the fourth generation they shall come hither again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not full," is so evidently adapted to the circumstances of the Israelites before and after they had left Egypt, that it must have been invented by Moses to induce them to follow his commands, and to submit to that authority by which he formed them to be a separate nation. The sixteenth chapter of Genesis relates a very indelicate transaction on the part of Sarai, Abram's wife, who grieving that she was childless, requested her husband to take her maid-servant to his bed, v. 2, in hopes that she might be more fortunate than herself from her husband's embraces; and tho' the old gentleman was in his eighty-sixth year, neither she nor the virgin was disappointed, for

lo! the handmaid conceived, and from that time her master took such a liking to her, that Sarai began to repent of her project, for a scene ensued not uncommon in many decent families, when the maid finds she is preferred to her mistress; Hagar began to give herself airs, and to look upon Sarai with contempt, and most likely, had not the prudence of the writer concealed it, we should have had a scene described somewhat like one in Joseph Andrews, book i. where the master of an inn excited his wife's jealousy by no very wonderful preference of the maid to the mistress; but Abram very prudently consented to put an end to all further strife, and turned the poor girl to the door, at his wife's request; but having had to do with such a holy man as Abram, she was not forsaken, for an angel of the Lord came to her and asked her what was the matter, and when he found she had been turned out of her master's house, he comforted her, and told her that she was with child (as if she did not know it), but that tho' it was her first, it should not be her last, "for *he* would multiply her seed exceedingly, so that it should not be numbered for multitude," (a pretty impudent speech for an angel!) whether he meant it literally, or only as God is said to multiply the

seed of any one when he makes his generation numerous—for surely it was just about as modest for an angel to say, “I will do so and so,” as for a man sent on a message to say, “*I* desire your acceptance of a brace of tench,” and not “*My master* desires your acceptance of a brace of tench.” The angel, however, gave the girl very good advice; and persuaded her to go back to her mistress and make a proper submission ; and so it seems she did, for her son Ishmael was born, and afterwards circumcised, in her master’s house. Now considering the solemn institution of matrimony in the second chapter of Exodus, v. 24, which, as our church says “was instituted in the time of man’s innocency,” Vide *Marriage Ceremony*; the conduct of Sarai in thus tempting her husband to commit adultery, and of Abram in yielding to the temptation, was justly reprehensible; unless it should be urged, that they who pretend to an intimate communication with the Deity, are privileged above other mortals, and that they are allowed to commit iniquity without censure or impropriety. We have seen that even Pharaoh, a heathen, considered the crime of adultery with abhorrence, tho’ it would have been no crime in him if he had been deceived by Abram’s calling her his

sister; a pious fraud, which tho' in Abram it was excused, would in any other man have been considered as a base disguise,—*Gen. xii, v. 13.* The seventeenth chapter of Genesis relates the call of Abraham to be the founder of the Jewish nation; the mode in which it is related is degrading to the Deity, and inconsistent with the declaration contained in another part of the Bible, that “no man hath seen God at any time,” for it expressly says, “God appeared unto Abraham;” they conversed together, and Abraham even ventured to question the power of the Deity, when he said, “Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old, and shall she that is ninety years old bear a child? O! that Ishmael might live before thee,” v. 17. 18. God then promised that Sarah should bear him a son, whom he should call Isaac, and “as for Ishmael, I have heard thee, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make of him a great nation.” If natural children are so honored by God, why should they be treated otherwise by men? surely God never meant that a stain should be fixed upon bastardy, tho’ man has judged otherwise, and wisely to; for to place bastards

in the same rank with legitimate children, is to lessen the respect due to matrimony. The twenty-second verse contains a circumstance of so trifling and familiar a nature, as to be totally inconsistent with any ideas which men of elevated minds can have formed of the divinity, "And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham,"—(up to heaven must be meant no doubt); so that we have here the great God of heaven, that spiritual and incomprehensible Being, "whom no man hath seen or can see," talking familiarly with a mortal, and then after a conversation, which does him no credit, flying up to heaven. The man who considers the book in which these things are contained, as a divine revelation, must have a very different idea of the Divinity from what he is represented by the Deists, or even by the Christians; for the latter only bring him upon earth in the person of his Son. The commencement of the eighteenth chapter is so ridiculously familiar, as to be altogether laughable did it speak only of men, but when relating the conduct of the messengers of heaven, degrades them to the rank of very ordinary mortals. The first verse tells us that "The Lord appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre, while he sat at

his tent door, in the heat of the sun," but the second says, " He liftēd up his eyes, and lo! *three men* stood by him," and he ran to meet them, and said, " My Lord," not my Lords, " pass not away from thy servant," and when they had consented to stay, he hastened into the tent to Sarah, and told her to make some cakes, and ordered one of his young men to dress a calf, which with butter and milk (for the cakes were forgotten), were set before them, and while they did eat, he stood by them under a tree—the rest of the conversation not being very proper for female ears, I must suppress it; suffice it to say, the heavenly messengers told Sarah she should have a child, at which, after an indelicate expostulation, the old woman laughed. The 13th verse begins thus, " And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child which am old?" v. 15, " Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh." Can any thing possibly be more ludicrous or more expressly calculated to degrade religion in the eyes of sensible men than the whole of this account? First of all, the confusion between the angels of God, and God himself, then the familiarity of the trans-

actions, such as the angels eating ; the bustling haste of Abraham to get them a good dinner ; the womanish curiosity of Sarah in listening at the tent door ; the telling a lie to evade the charge of laughing at a messenger of God ; and the extreme folly of her supposing that by a lie she could conceal her rudeness, or mistrust, or call it what you will, from the great God of heaven, who is supposed to know all things ; the whole transaction I repeat it, is the most ridiculous and inconsistent with any rational notions of the Deity that any mortal ever ventured to deliver to the world ; tho' as a mere story, it is entertaining, and gives a lively picture of the simplicity of ancient times. The story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, was no doubt well intended to excite our abhorrence of a detestable crime, and from the belief of their signal punishment, it has had the effect ; but it is told in a method so ludicrous and improbable, that had it been found in any other book than the Bible, which early impressions have sanctified in the minds of some people, it would have been read only with laughter and contempt. The ridiculous bargain between the Almighty and Abraham ; the attempts of the people of Sodom to ravish the angels ; and the transformation of Lot's

wife into a pillar of salt for her curiosity; are all so thoroughly unworthy of a transaction in which the Deity was concerned, as to shew that the man who wrote it had received no inspiration but that of folly and credulity—but as if it was not enough to be ridiculous, all this was succeeded by a transaction at which human nature shudders, and which to our ideas of natural and unnatural crimes exceeds those of the Sodomites by many degrees. The daughters of Lot finding that there was not “a man to come in unto them,” (these are the words of the Bible), determined lustfully to make their father drunk, and then to excite him to commit incest, which they each successively accomplished, and each bore a son by their father; and yet this horrid crime received neither one word of reproof from the writer, nor the slightest punishment from heaven. To this affair of Lot succeeds another equally singular: Abraham it seems, journeying from *thence*, but we are not told *whence*, had occasion to travel thro’ the kingdom of Abimelech; and for fear that his wife, *then ninety years of age*, should be taken from him by some other man, he said she is my sister. Abimelech, therefore, supposing her such, took her for his wife; but God in a dream soon convinced him of his mis-

take, and told him he was a dead man for what he had done; Abimelech conscious of *intending no harm*, gave the Lord a very saucy answer, and said, "Wilt thou then destroy a righteous nation?" Abimelech then expostulated with Abraham, who after explaining the motives of his having recourse to the fraud, excused himself by a pitiful evasion in saying, "She is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not of my mother;" The Lord, upon Abimelech's dismissing her, remitted the punishment he had intended against the nation, for his fault, "healed Abimelech and his wife, and his maid-servants, and they bare children," *Gen. xx. verse 17.* Did Abimelech bear children too, as well as his wife, and his maid-servants? Shortly after this Sarah brought forth her promised child; which so far excited the mirth and jealousy of Hagar, the repudiated and reconciled hand-maid, that she mocked at her, and Sarah saw her mocking, and said to her husband, "Cast out this bond-woman and her son; for the son of this bond-woman shall not inherit with my son, even with Isaac; and the thing was grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his son; chap. xxi. verses 9, 10, 11." Notwithstanding this, however, poor Hagar and her child were turn-

ed to the door, and the latter was so near starving, that his mother not able to bear the sight of him dying, "set him down a bowshot from her, that she might not see him depart;" but here in strict compliance with the rule of Horace, a difficulty arose which could not be got rid of without the aid of a God, and so down came an angel to save the child's life; and the same angel as before, I imagine, with the same presumptuous confidence, tells her to lift up the lad, and hold him in her hand: "for **I** will make him a great nation," verse 18; "and God opened her eyes, and she saw a well, and she filled a bottle with water, and gave the lad a drink, and God was with the lad, and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became a great archer." The next extraordinary transaction related in Genesis, is the trial of Abraham by the command of God to sacrifice his son; and for this signal act of faith he was rewarded, as he well deserved, with a promise "that his seed should be multiplied as the stars of heaven, and that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed," a prophetic declaration, which has been forcibly applied to Jesus Christ as the promised seed. The venerable Sarah soon after departed this life, aged one hundred and twenty-seven years,

and Abraham purchased for her a most costly place of interment. Keturah, the second wife of Abraham, brought him five children, but "he gave all that he had to Isaac," chap. xxv. v. 5.; and yet the next verse says, that "To the sons of the concubines which Abraham had, he gave gifts, and sent them away eastward." In our eyes, that is in the eyes of all just and honest men, Abraham dealt very unjustly with these children; for tho' natural children are not to be placed on an equality with those which are legitimate, it is both cruel and unjust to neglect them, or send them adrift with a small pittance, and to leave them nothing at the last. The conventions of society may modify and abridge the claims of nature, but they cannot destroy them altogether. The transaction by which Jacob defrauded Esau of his father's blessing, tho' not noticed with any mark of disapprobation by the writer, is totally contrary to those rules of moral honesty, without which religion is a vain and wicked pretence. The character of Jacob is marked throughout by that worldly cunning which scruples nothing, and is at all times fertile in expedients for the advancement of its worldly interest, chap. xxx. from verse 25 to 43. It must be remembered also that

he became the father of twelve sons, heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, by two sisters, and by *various concubines*; and his cowardly fear of his brother Esau, whose just resentment he had so much reason to dread, presents him in the light of a man, who tho' he dared not defend his misdeeds, to save himself from danger, would humble himself even to those whom he hated. The open, disinterested, and generous character of Esau, is a fine contrast to his brother's meanness. And here let me remark, that the Bible considered only as a book of history and morality, is in many places finely written, and contains many useful and excellent precepts, and they who consider it in this light only, may shew ample justice to its merits. It is only when viewed as a divine composition, that it can sink in the estimation of judicious and impartial men, for there are many parts of it equal, if not superior to the best heathen moralists and historians. As a book of instruction and entertainment, therefore, it may safely be consulted by those whose judgment has been matured by time and experience, or even by young persons under proper restrictions, but not as the word of God, or a book calculated to inspire just notions of a Divinity.— Genesis xxviii. verse 20, represents Jacob mak-

ing a singular bargain with the Deity, “ And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again unto my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God.” The whole story of Jacob, his wives, and his concubines, is hardly to be reconciled either with religion or morality. The incest of his son Reuben is contrary to the first, and his own conduct with his father-in-law, Laban, in his bargain about the sheep, was as base an artifice as ever was practised by any of his modern descendants; yet both are justified by the pious commentator, Ostervald, whose Bible is chiefly read by the lower ranks. The horrid transaction related in the thirty-fourth chapter of Genesis, is hardly to be paralleled for treachery and cruelty in the history of the most savage tribes, much less should it have been found in the history of God’s own people.—The sons of Jacob were reproached by their father, it does not seem however that their conduct was disapproved by heaven, if we are to judge from their being each at the head of a tribe, or the fathers of that people who were the chosen people of God.

The thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis com-

mences the history of Joseph and his brethren ; and in many respects it is one of the most entertaining and interesting stories recorded in ancient or modern history ; it is a picture of human nature correctly drawn from the original in the early ages of mankind, and the simplicity of the stile accords with the simple grandeur of the subject.-- With the life of Joseph ends the book of Genesis, or book of the creation, as it is translated from the Hebrew into the Greek. Of this book Moses was the reputed author, but as all that he relates happened long before his birth, it can only be from tradition that he received its contents, for he makes no pretence to inspiration. The tradition was probably enlarged by his own invention, for the whole object of the book being to support the designs of Moses in making the Jews a separate nation, and leading them forth from the Egyptians, he wisely employed his whole mind to convince them that every thing he did and told, was by the special direction of heaven. The first object of Moses was to place himself at the head of the Jewish nation, and for this purpose he contrived two expedients ; the first, to deliver them from their Egyptian bondage ; the next, to preach to them a new religion, the worship of one God ; but the God

which he preached to them, was a God of his own making, endowed with human passions, and subject to every human weakness ; altho' Moses makes him speak of himself with all the ideas of majesty and sublimity. The great law-giver of the Jews flying from Egypt, his native country, for having murdered an Egyptian, and hid him in the sand, married the daughter of a priest of Midian. The first interview of Moses with the Almighty was near mount Horeb, *Exod.* chap. iii. when a long dialogue took place, at which no one else was present. These dialogues, between the Deity and the founders of new religions, are not uncommon in the history of nations. Such were the nightly meetings between Numa Pompilius and the goddess Egeria ; such were the conferences between Mahomet and the angel Gabriel. The advice given to Moses by the Almighty, is by no means consistent with our ideas of a divine Being ; he promises to harden the heart of Pharaoh, and then to punish him for that hardness in refusing to let the Israelites depart. He instructs Moses also to cause the Jewish women to borrow valuable jewels of the Egyptians, which were never to be returned ; the Jews therefore, have the highest authority for every act of fraud they

practise upon the Gentiles.—Being fully inspired with the idea of a divine command for the deliverance of his nation, Moses departs from the land of Midian, and meets God on his road, who reminds him of the magic arts he was to display before the Egyptian king, to enhance the crime of his obduracy. The twenty-fourth verse of chap. iv. is ridiculously familiar, and unconnected with the context.—“And it came to pass by the way, in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him,” (most likely because he had neglected to circumcise his son Gershom.) Soon after he met his brother Aaron in the wilderness, a fit place to concert together their grand scheme of political and religious polity; in a few days they arrived in Egypt, and began to put in execution the scheme for the deliverance of Israel; when after many ineffectual attempts to obtain the leave of Pharaoh, and many pretended miracles by both, the whole people with one consent secretly departed from Egypt, to the amount of many thousands, and in a few days they arrived in that great desert which separates Egypt from the land of Judea, at that time possessed by the Canaanites, &c. whom Moses very wisely determined to drive out, by pretending a divine claim to their

territory. The sixteenth chapter of Exodus, verse 2, tells us, that after the people had been one month and fifteen days from Egypt, they murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness; for “they thought of the flesh-pots of Egypt, and that they did eat bread to the full”, and they told their leaders that they had brought them out into the wilderness to be starved. On this it is said, that the Lord hearing their cry, told Moses that he would rain bread from heaven; but having seen Exodus vii. verse 11, 22, that the magicians of Egypt could also perform miracles, our faith in these extraordinary deviations from the laws of nature must be very strong if we believe them merely from written testimony; and it ought to be remembered, that no miracles were ever performed among the Jews after they became known to other nations by the conquest of Alexander; before that, they had every thing their own way; whatever they were weak enough to believe, their historians told them; and they certainly were a people of very marvellous faith, for there was nothing they could not believe. The whole history of their passage thro’ the desert is a series of miracles, and therefore, so far as it was miraculous could not have happened; and to us who

live at this distance of time, even supposing it had happened, could not be proved by any human evidence. The twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and some other prophetic declarations of Moses, are said to be a sufficient testimony of the divine revelation imparted to him ; but before these pretended predictions can have any effect to that purpose, it must be proved that the religion he delivered was worthy of God ; that the God he shewed to the Israelites was in all things a Being such as the reason of men at all times and all ages can approve, in short, that he is a Being infinitely wise, beneficent, and powerful ; for if the God-head from whom this religion came, and the religion itself are not such as are worthy the adoration and practice of mankind from their infinite excellence, it is only begging the question to say that the religion is from heaven.— But even allowing these prophetic warnings to the Israelites to be the genuine text of the Bible, and not interpolated by the Jews, who are a people capable of any species of fraud to serve their own purposes, it is very easy to believe that Moses, a man of uncommon talents, would have taken equal pains with Mahomet (whom all Christians deny to have delivered a divine religion), to perpetuate the Jewish

people as a separate nation; and nothing surely could be better calculated for that purpose, than the institution of ordinances and ceremonies, which should keep them apart from all the nations of the world. The intimate union of their civil and religious polity, was an expedient admirably adapted to separate them from all other nations; for no man who is acquainted with the influence of religion on the human mind can doubt for a moment, that priests are a set of men much better calculated to retain their authority than either kings or lawgivers. It is, therefore, most highly probable, that it is the religion of Moses which has kept the Jews together for so many hundred years, and not merely their civil polity, tho' a system admirably contrived. Having fully impressed the Jews with the belief of a powerful, unrelenting, and terrific Deity, who would visit the sins of the fathers unto the third and fourth generation, and blast the temporal prosperity of those who disobeyed him; it is easy to believe, considering the infinitely greater effect that present punishments have upon the mind than those which are future, that there should be at this moment so many true disciples of Moses, and so few of Jesus Christ. The one denounced temporal punishments, the other

future ones; and no man will doubt which has the greater effect, even on the minds of believers. Moses wisely foreseeing that the nation of the Jews, like other nations, might be conquered and dispersed, took every possible pains to render their religion perpetual; but whenever the Jews shall cease to adhere to their religion, or other nations shall admit them to an equality of civil rights, they will not much longer continue a separate people, but gradually amalgamate with the nations among whom they are dispersed. Had they been thus dealt with two thousand years ago, we should never have heard of the prophetic declarations of Moses being completed. It will be sufficient in order to prove that there was nothing divine in the religion of Moses, to consider in many instances the conduct of God, and the people of God, and to try them by the test of those principles of justice, humanity, and policy, which are observed and respected by all civilized nations, and will probably continue to be so while the reason and the interest of mankind continue the same as they are at present. The thirty-first chapter of Exodus, verse 18, is a sufficient evidence to any man of sense, of the falsity of all Moses's pretensions to a divine revela-

tion ; for besides other passages in which he gives the Deity a material form and substance, he expressly there says, "and he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." Now this is so completely impossible, that according to the rules of human testimony, it will go to falsify the whole of what he has elsewhere related ; for should a witness in a court of justice, relate a fact so much at variance with possibility, no credit whatever could be given to any thing else he could say ; it would be taken for a fraud, for the effect of a prolific imagination employed to varnish over some fictitious tale, which the witness had an interest in supporting, but it could never be received as the evidence of a man seriously relating what he knew and believed. In the thirty-second chapter of Exodus, we are told that when Moses came down from the mount, he found that the people had mistrusted his account of the Deity, and relapsed into their former idolatry : in order, therefore, to frighten them, he represented a conversation with God Almighty, who had seen their iniquity, and in which he intreated the Lord for them, but the Lord would not

hearken unto him, and said, verse 10, " let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, that I may consume them : but I will make of thee a great nation." The prudent legislator, in order to make the most of himself with the people, pretended that he besought the Lord, and said, " Lord ! why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, whom thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt ?— Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, for mischief did he bring them out, to consume them from the face of the earth ?" — " And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." " And Moses went down with the two tables in his hand : and the tables were the work of God, and the writing was written by God, and graven upon the tables." *Exod.* chap. xxxii. verse 11 to 16. No other argument can be wanting to a reasonable man than this single passage, to prove that the whole Jewish revelation was a contrivance of Moses to impress his religion on the people ; for a man who could talk so unworthily of God, who could represent him as a mere mortal, subject to the passions of anger, jealousy, and resentment ; who could speak of him as retracting at one moment, what he had fully purposed the moment before, must have

very inadequate conceptions of a spiritual and universal Being: with Moses he is only the God of the Jews, and a God like the Jews themselves; cruel, revengeful, selfish, irritable, and inconsistent; and surely the great God of heaven could never consent to have himself so represented by a mortal, as to be exclusively the God of one people; to harden the hearts of all others, and then to punish them for that hardness of heart, which was the result of his own determination. It is somewhat singular that by the account of Moses the Lord was visible only to himself; for in the thirty-third chapter of Exodus, tho' the cloudy pillar stood at the door of the tabernacle, the Lord talked only with Moses; he was not seen by the people, but he "talked to Moses face to face, as a man talketh with his friend," verse 11; and yet verse 20, the Lord said, "Thou canst not see my face, for no man can see my face and live;" verse 23, "I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face can not be seen." It is impossible to produce all the passages, even in the five books of Moses, that are inconsistent with any rational notions of the Deity. The few more which I intend to cite, will, I trust, be sufficient to convince every unbiassed mind, that a religion

which represents God in a character so inconsistent with the unlimited attributes of mercy, justice, and benevolence, cannot be a divine religion. If therefore in such a space of time since the creation of the world (supposing it to have been created), no revelation of the Deity has been given to man, consistent with reason, it is a very just presumption that no such revelation will ever be given; because the nature of God and man, if it be allowable to argue from that which is known to that which is unknown, are so essentially different, that the faculties of man are unable to receive such a revelation; there is no method of conveying it to mankind which shall equally convince all nations; and a mere partial revelation is unworthy of the Deity, because such a revelation of his will must ever be liable to dispute and contradiction. Besides, its being partial and subject to a variety of interpretations, affords an argument against the infinite wisdom and benevolence of the Deity, as tending to create divisions and dissensions among mankind, rather than to disseminate peace, virtue, benevolence, justice, and harmony. It is not my intention to enlarge on the merits of the Jewish law, tho' I am willing to allow them; they are such as

entitle Moses and his brother, who had also a share in their formation, to the highest praise for wisdom and policy in some instances, and in many others for their humanity; my only design at present is, to convince those who are open to conviction, that it is not a divine revelation. To see God, and to talk to him face to face is not permitted to man as the Bible tells us; and yet without that, no man can be sure he has had a revelation from God: a revelation is therefore impossible. The exhortations contained in the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy for the destruction of idolatrous cities, is little consonant with the ideas of a God of mercy, but thoroughly consistent with that of a man who was resolved to exalt the nation of which he was a leader, by the extirpation of those whose land he was determined to occupy. Having thus by all the arts which human ingenuity could contrive, ensured the perpetuity of the Jewish nation, and brought them within sight of the promised land, Moses, like Romulus, vanished from the sight of the people, in order to give them an idea of his being received into heaven, and thus acquire for his laws and institutions the greater sanctity and solemnity. He was succeeded by a leader of his own appointment, in every respect qualified to fulfil

his intentions, and complete what he had begun.

The first thing worthy of remark performed by Joshua, was to cause the river Jordan to separate, and let the ark and the people pass over dry; the next was to make the walls of a large city fall down at the sound of a trumpet, when all the people, and every thing alive were put to the sword, except Rahab the harlot and her friends, because she had received the spies that were sent by Joshua. The story of the punishment of Achan, chap. vii., is hardly to be paralleled in history; the Israelites were not permitted to save any thing belonging to the nations whom they were commanded to root out, and Achan having taken of "the accursed thing," (that is, a part of the spoils of the enemy's garments, silver, and gold), he, and his sons, and his daughters, and his cattle, and all that he had, were stoned with stones, and burned with fire; wherefore the name of the place was called Achor. The twelfth chapter records a miracle, which, according to the solar system as it is now understood, is no miracle at all; for as the earth moves round the sun, which is placed in the centre, the sun never moves; and, therefore, the man who told this as a miracle, shewed his ignorance, and proved that no credit is due to his

testimony. To notice all the instances of iniquity and immorality contained in the Old Testament, would be a dreary and a tedious task; I will content myself with a few more, which will be sufficient to prove that it contains not a divine revelation. The second chapter of the First of Kings contains such a proof of deliberate treachery and cruelty in two of the most beloved servants of the Lord, as ought to be sufficient to convince the most hardened believer, that their religion was all a pretence; that it was mere words, and had no effect in subduing their vicious propensities. "The days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, and said, I go the way of all the earth; be thou strong, therefore, and shew thyself a man;" in verse 5, he goes on thus, "Thou knowest what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, do thou, therefore, according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace," a tolerable legacy of cruelty from a father to his son! but nothing compared to verse 8 and 9, which I have not room to quote. Solomon, however, was not deficient in following his father's example; Adonijah, another son of David, had started as a competitor for the crown with Solomon, and his cause had been

espoused by Joab the son of Zeruiab, and Abiathar the priest; but finding they had no hopes of success, they surrendered themselves, trusting to Solomon's mercy, who promised that not a hair of them should fall to the earth; yet when the said Adonijah petitioned for leave to take Abishag the Shullamite, David's female attendant, to wife, Solomon thinking it an indignity, put them all to the sword, with the most merciless treachery, 1 Kings, chap. ii. Let any man read the Bible attentively, and he will find innumerable instances of equal wickedness, tho' the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Ecclesiasticus, are manuals of wisdom which ought to be in every man's hands.

The historical part of the Bible, from Joshua to Esther, contains a great deal of entertainment, and some instruction; considered as a portion of ancient history, and the history of a very singular people, separated from the rest of the world by the pretensions of their great legislator to a divine revelation, it may be read privately with much advantage, but it is very improper to be read aloud in a public church indiscriminately; nor indeed ought it to be put into the hands of youth without some selection; for many chapters, at least many verses, contain things inconsistent with that rever-

ence which we owe to the minds of children.

The book of Job is full of gloomy reflections on the vanity of wealth and wordly enjoyments; it is most likely a poetical composition, which accounts for the bold personification of God and the Devil, and may be read in many parts with considerable advantage by those who are apt to rely too much on their wealth, their prosperity, and felicity.

The Psalms of David, tho' not all written by himself, contain the meditations of a man who had experienced various changes of life, and are in many parts applicable to every man's circumstances; therefore, setting aside the inconsistency between his piety and his wickedness, they may be read with great advantage, as there are few men who will not find some parts in unison with their own feelings. The frequent personification of Nature and Destiny under the name of the Lord, however pleasing to pious ears and weak minds, is disgusting and ridiculous to those who have looked more deeply into things, and consider the Divinity as a person, to exist only in the mind of man, and as an essence in the works of the creation. The same remark may be extended to the Proverbs, and to every part of the Jewish and Christian religions, where the

name of God is invoked or applied, as having a personal existence. The Proverbs, with some few exceptions, are a manual of ancient wisdom, founded on the nature of things, and on the perpetual relations which exist among mankind; they will continue to exist with little variation under every form of society; and, therefore, this book may be read with constant advantage by all ranks and descriptions of persons, as it is clothed in the venerable language of antiquity, and sanctioned by the experience of ages, I recommend it in preference to most of the modern books of morality, which are much too diffuse, and too metaphysical for vulgar apprehension.

The book of Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher, contains the reflections of a man worn out with pleasure, and grown grey in iniquity; the gloomy railings of a satiated voluptuary, who had found his frame too weak for the indulgence of his desires; yet they may serve to shew the folly and vanity of indulging to excess, in the enjoyment of sensual delights, and that nothing is truly valuable but wisdom, or a just estimate of human life. It is much wiser to use our enjoyments moderately, than to indulge in them to excess, and then cry out with the preacher, "All is vanity."—Prior has com-

posed a beautiful didactic poem from this book of scripture, of which Johnson says, "It is a poem far from deserving to be neglected, he that shall peruse it will be able to mark many passages to which he may recur for instruction and delight; many from which the poet may learn to write, and the philosopher to reason."

Life of Prior.

The Song of Solomon is undoubtedly a poetical composition, and being written in the warm and luscious phraseology of the east, is somewhat too voluptuous for the cold imaginations of the north. They who can find in it a spiritual meaning, as the translators of the Bible have, might with equal ingenuity spiritualize the Ballad of Robin Hood, or Chevy Chace. It is impossible for any thing to be more sensual, nor more unfit for the delicate ears of English females; it is, therefore, very properly not comprehended in the lessons used for the church service. Whoever wishes to see religion burlesqued by a forced interpretation of its meaning, may consult Dr. Gray's explanation of the Song of Solomon. If it were not upon so serious a subject, and the Doctor a serious man, I should suppose he meant to be ironical.—*Vide Gray's Key to the Old Testament*, p. 303.

The prophets, considered as poetical rhapsodists, contain many beautiful flights of imagination, but as serious productions, foretelling future events, I never can consider them, whatever may have been the intention of their authors. As they are capable of any interpretation which the visionary fancies of religious enthusiasts may force them to, they have been applied with equal confidence to a variety of different persons and events, and, therefore, tho' they are not entitled to any degree of credit, they are capable of doing much mischief, and have created much confusion both among the learned and the unlearned.

The Books called the Apocrypha, or *doubtful*, are not considered by the church as dictated by divine inspiration; what it is that constitutes the proof of such inspiration I cannot determine, except it be the pretending to it.

The Book of Esdras is historical, and contains much entertainment.

The story of Tobit is amusingly ridiculous, but not more so than the Arabian Nights.

Judith contains the history of a magnanimous woman, and Esther that of a virtuous one, and both are equally instructive and entertaining.

The Wisdom of Solomon, and the book of

Ecclesiasticus, are mines, stores, and treasures of wisdom, if we except their religious belief, and the folly it occasions.

The book of Baruch was well calculated to console the Jews in their captivity, and may be read with instruction as connected with that eventful period.

The Song of the Three Children is a thanksgiving to God for his mercy, which they who believe in it may sing with joyful hearts.

The story of Susanna and the Elders is an amusing and instructive example of hoary iniquity and youthful chastity.

The history of the Priests of Bel is a proof of what priests will do, and have been doing in all ages for the support of their idols.

The Books of Maccabees contain an amusing history, and afford many interesting subjects for painters and poets.

To sum up the whole that may be said of the Old Testament, it is in my opinion a book of infinite worth, tho' it be not considered as a divine revelation; its greatest fault is the pretension it makes to a pre-eminence over all other books, but as no just claim can be proved to that singular distinction, we must consider its merits altogether independent of such a pretence. The evils of heathen idolatry had

been so abundantly proved by the cruelties and the abominations which it sanctioned, that the idea of one supreme and undivided Deity presented itself to the minds of thinking and rational men, as a means of putting an end to the miseries of polytheism ; this worship, if it ever had existed, being almost obliterated among the people of Egypt, Moses undertook to restore ; but like all religions which are the creation of fallible and finite beings, it contained a great mixture of truth and error ; it represented the Deity as subject to human passions, and so far from exempting his worshippers from their excesses, it shewed that tho' less subject to them than their idolatrous fellow-creatures, they were still liable to many crimes and weaknesses ; in short, it partook of the temper of its founder. The chosen people of God, as Moses entitled the Jews, were a very singular people, and their history is well worth the attention of the philosopher and the moralist ; not because of their pretension to a divine original, but because they have existed as a nation near four thousand years, with very little variation in their laws and customs, or in their national character ; and because it contains many examples of disgusting iniquity, and very few of exalted or uncommon virtue.

The historical part of the Bible, however, is not that which most claims our attention, the moral beauties of the Psalms, the Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, and of those parts of the Apocrypha which are called Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon, contain food for perpetual meditation and practical improvement; and he that can read them without feeling that he has advanced in wisdom must have a very dull head, or a very callous heart. If any sect should be found to arise who would preach only the morality of the Bible, that sect would make atonement for all the cruelties, follies, and iniquities, which have been caused by its doctrines. From these considerations it is in my opinion much to be desired, that every degree of publicity should be given to the Bible among all people, and among all nations; and when it is left to find its own level in the estimation of mankind without any external aid, it will pass for no more than it is worth, and be considered as a very ancient and instructive compendium of history and morality. The neglect and contempt into which it has fallen, arises from its pretensions to superior sanctity; and men who have very justly considered those pretensions as incompatible with our nature, and with any human

composition, have fallen with all the weakness of fallible men into the opposite extreme, and held up the whole of the Bible as a subject of ridicule and contempt, because in many things it contradicted their passions and their reason. Others again never deigning to examine the nature of that which they had been accustomed to despise, and passing their whole time in profligacy and dissipation, without a moment's reflection on their duties or their crimes, reject and despise that which they have been told contains so many censures on levity and profligacy, and, therefore, they never open the Bible but with a view to turn it into ridicule, at the same time that they are insensible to their own error, in thoughtlessly abusing what they have taken no pains to understand. The excessive admiration of those on the other hand, who consider every word and letter of the Bible as the effect of divine inspiration, is not less worthy the censure of considerate and impartial men who weigh all things in the balance of wisdom, and judge of every thing by its intrinsic merits, who are ever ready to hear the arguments of opposite sides, but are seldom led away by the passions of either. Such men, and such alone can discriminate between those parts of the Old

Testament which are worthy of consideration, and those which thro' the ignorance, arrogance, or pride of the writers, merit only to be treated with contempt; such are those which contain pretensions to divine communications, to be "*written with the finger of God*," and to be exempt from all mixture of human weakness. The higher a man exalts himself, the more he deserves to be humbled; so it is with those parts of the Old Testament which pretend to be divinely inspired; they aim at exalting their authors above the common lot of human beings, at dictating to all the rest of the world, and claiming an exemption from that portion of frailty to which all human compositions are liable; and yet it will be found upon examination, that those mortals who are thus represented as the best beloved of heaven, are inferior to the rest of their fellow-creatures, in many things by their weaknesses and crimes. No man ever existed who laid stronger claims to superior sanctity, or to be more beloved of the Lord than David, and yet no man both in his life, and in his dying moments, ever displayed a more cruel, uncharitable disposition, was more the slave of his passions, or more totally disregarded the happiness of others when it came in competition with his own. Notwith-

standing, the blot it contains in such characters as David, and many others who boasted of being the chosen ministers of heaven, the poetical, historical, and moral excellencies of the Bible are so great as to outweigh its defects, and to make it with proper attention, a book for perpetual meditation, a fund of useful knowledge, and a manual of morality, such as almost to supercede the necessity of any other. A good abridgement of it, would therefore, be a most estimable book; but the difficulty of the undertaking is almost a sufficient obstacle to its ever being properly executed. The chief thing requisite to guard against its doing any farther harm, (for great harm no doubt the idea of its being a divine revelation has occasioned), is to consider throughout the whole of it, the words *Lord* and *God*, as mere figurative and metaphorical expressions to represent the agency of nature, or impose on the credulous, and to give a sanction to the inventions of men. With this reservation the Bible may be safely and profitably studied by all ranks of people, and without a risque of its ever again arming one half of mankind against the other, in support of any religious opinion.

A slight examination of the New Testament will be sufficient to convince any impartial man

how little claim it has to be considered as a divine revelation—on the external evidence by which it is supported, I mean to say nothing, because nothing can be said. It is not known when the different books it contains were written, nor for certain by whom they were written; they are not noticed by any writer of any other nation, and we have no further proof of their authenticity, than the testimony of ecclesiastical historians, all of whom were interested in their divine origin.

The whole life of Jesus Christ, supposing such a man ever existed, is that of an honest enthusiast, who, from a constant perusal of the prophetic writings, had, by giving them a spiritual interpretation, worked himself up to a belief of his being the promised Messiah; tho' in a sense different from what the Jews had been accustomed to understand it. That Jesus spoke much truth and much wisdom, every man must allow, but it was at a time when truth and wisdom were rare commodities; that he only *pretended* to work miracles, must be allowed, if it is allowed that the world is governed by fixed and general laws, which no Being whatever has the power to alter.

The genealogy of Christ as related by Matthew, contains his descent from Abraham to

David, and from David to Joseph, but this descent is neither legitimate, nor unbroken—first, the birth of Phares, the father of Esrom, is stained with indelible marks of incest, fornication, and adultery, and therefore totally breaks the line of legitimate descent, *Gen.* xxxviii.—from Abraham to Jechonias, the train of succession is to be followed in the books of Kings and Chronicles, but after that it is lost, and we have only the word of Matthew for its existence—but even supposing it to be correct and accurate, of what use is it when we are told in verse 8, that Joseph was only the *reputed* father of Jesus, for that his mother being a virgin, was found with child by the Holy Ghost. What is the Holy Ghost? Ghost is an old word for spirit. What is spirit? It is not matter, and that is all we know about it. Verse 19, 20, says “that the husband of the damsel finding her with child, would have put her away privily, but the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, and told him that she was with child by the Holy Ghost, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet,” on which the good man, not willing to contaminate that which was produced by a holy spirit, “knew not his wife, till she had brought forth

her first-born son." Had we read these verses in any of the contemptible nonsense which goes under the name of Apocryphal gospels, we should have treated it is it deserves, but as the gospels we believe in have been sanctioned by the authority of the church for sixteen hundred years, we conceive them to be entitled to all our respect and veneration, and our minds are so completely perverted by the force of long and early prepossessions, that we cannot induce ourselves to believe that what has so long been held sacred, can be ridiculous. The wise men mentioned in the second chapter, must have been astrologers, or believers in the influence of the stars on the conduct and destiny of men, for, say they, "We have seen his star in the east." The story of Herod murdering all the young children is utterly improbable, when we reflect, that all Judea was at that time subject to the Romans, and that Herod held his small degree of power under the Roman governor. The sixteenth and seventeenth verses contain one of those improbable and impossible events which would shake the credit of any history, not written by the hand of the Deity. "And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens open-

ed unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." Saw a spirit—Impossible! a spirit cannot be visible to mortal eyes. "And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." The voice must have been the voice of God, therefore God is not spirit, but matter—and if material, then human. Such are the contradictions and follies of all pretenders to revelation. The story of Christ's temptation, which begins the fourth chapter, is one of the most ridiculous in the whole of the New Testament, for it speaks of a personage equal in power to God, whom it represents under the name of the Devil—such were the gross ideas of the vulgar in all countries, and such they are still. The Devil is believed to be a man, with the legs and the horns of a beast—but men of sense and reflection consider this Being as nothing more than the evil dispositions of human nature personified. Good is God, and Evil is the Devil—this is the sum and substance of all religion. The fifth chapter begins the famous sermon on the Mount, which has been called by some zealous Christians, a complete epitome of morality. It is no such thing: it contains many practicable, and many imprac-

ticable precepts, but it contains neither the whole, nor the half of our moral duties.—Chap. viii. verse 16, “When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils.” It is truly astonishing that there should ever have been any question among persons of common sense about the reality of these possessions, for when we consider the vulgar notions about devils, it is impossible to account for stories by any other means than the gross ignorance of the multitude, who conceived some of those diseases of the mind to which mankind are subject, to have been inflicted by the actual residence of Devils in the human frame.

The moral tendency of the gospel was in a great measure opposed to the ceremonial observances of the Jewish law, and had not Christ and his apostle Paul loaded that benevolent system with so many burdensome and ridiculous doctrines, it might have been truly said, as far as regards the most practicable moral precepts of Christianity, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” The twelfth chapter begins with a strong evidence of Jesus Christ’s contempt for Jewish ceremonies, and more particularly for that of the sabbath, and his conduct in that respect deserves to be contrasted

with the dreary solemnity of a Presbyterian Sunday, or even with the farcical sanctity observed on that day by some members of the Church of England.

The peculiar beauty and excellence of Christ's teaching, consists in those parables, or analogues, so common among eastern nations; the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, is almost wholly occupied with these diverting and instructive allusions. The commencement of the fifteenth chapter throws considerable light on the character of Jesus. His great object was to restore the moral law of God, and to shew how it had been forgotten and neglected by the ceremonies and traditions of the Jews; he insists strongly on the necessity of moral purity, in opposition to rites and ceremonies; but to this reforming character, he united also the pretensions of being the Messiah, or temporal Saviour of the Jews; in a spiritual light he certainly would have released them from the bondage of the law, but they looked for a temporal Messiah, and having no power to make good his pretensions, they soon learnt to consider him as an impostor, and as such he was crucified. Verse 32, The miracle which begins at this verse and finishes the chapter, I will take upon me to say could never have been

performed, even in appearance, for no magician could make food out of nothing, neither could he make people believe they were filled. The sixteenth chapter is the most important in the whole book, for it contains the verses on which is founded that immense mass of fraud and folly, which has governed the world for so many ages, under the name of Popery. It seems that Jesus Christ began to doubt whether his disciples were sufficiently convinced of his divine pretensions, and after enquiring what other people said of him, he asked them with considerable earnestness, “What say ye that I am?” Peter, who was either more crafty, or more zealous than the rest, replied, “Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,” which drew from Jesus that pun upon his name, *πέτρος*, or Peter, which signifies a rock, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will found my church,” words more fatal to the peace and happiness of mankind were never spoken, and had they never been spoken, the world would have had cause to rejoice. The seventeenth chapter contains an account of some magical delusion practised on Peter, James, and John, which is commonly called the transfiguration, and for an elucidation of which, I refer my readers to Wraxall’s Memoirs of the Courts of

Berlin, Saxony, &c. vide vol. ii. p. 277. It is by no means requisite to undertake a full and complete examination of all the gospels, in order to prove the unjust pretensions of Jesus Christ to a divine original; whoever reads them with a disposition not previously determined to find excellence in all that they contain, will soon be convinced that they are the joint productions of credulity and imposture, and that with some truth they contain much falsehood, and much impossibility. The behaviour of Jesus Christ, as related by St Matthew and St Mark, in the last scene of his life, fully disproves his claim to Kingship and Divinity, and shews that he was a mortal, not much stronger than the rest of mankind. Fully impressed with the idea of his divine mission, when he was first apprehended, he surrendered himself without a struggle, because, as he said, "*The scripture must be fulfilled,*" on his trial he stood mute, because he refused to acknowledge any earthly jurisdiction; but at last overcome by the sufferings of human nature, and finding that God came not to his relief, he cried out in an agony of pain and of despair, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" It is to no purpose to say, that the other Evangelists have not related this ex-

clamation. The authority of the two who have related it, is as good as that of those who have omitted it. If he said it not, they have told a lie, and if he said it, he gave up the belief of his divine mission.

The gospel of St John differs much from the other three, and I believe was composed long after them all, for it enlarges more in the metaphysical stile of the Platonists on his divine original, and the greatest part of the facts it contains chiefly tend to the proof of his Divinity.

The idea of a divine revelation is so contradictory to reason, that had it not first been received in an age of ignorance and credulity, it would never have obtained credit in more enlightened times. It is somewhat singular that all revelations have originated among nations most remarkable for their gross ignorance. How comes it that we hear of no revelations among the Greeks and Romans?—Because the imposture would soon have been detected and exposed. A divine revelation is impossible, if there is no such Being as men have conceived God to be; the only true Revelation is the Book of Nature, this is equally intelligible at all times, to all people, and in all languages. Men first form a God, and then they form a

Revelation. The God of Moses was the creature of his own imagination ; no nation before his time had worshipped such a Being. Jesus Christ and Mahomet were inferior to Moses, because they only invented the Revelation, the God was the God of Moses. The great error from whence all Religions have their origin, is that of personifying the Vital Principle which animates and pervades all nature; when men get beyond that, they may fancy one God or ten thousand. It is difficult to conceive how matter and motion can have existed from eternity, yet it is more difficult to prove that they have not. On no subject whatever, have men committed more follies than on that of religion. They first deified the glorious orb of day, and then cast him down from his throne to exalt another and imaginary being to his place ; they have worshipped all the host of heaven, all the operations of Nature, and now they worship a Being formed from their own imagination ; a God who is every where, and no where ; whom all talk about familiarly, and all confess they cannot comprehend.

The Epistles are chiefly deserving notice as containing the principal doctrines of Christianity, and in them is found the origin of all the follies that have disturbed the world under the

names of different sects, all professing to be followers of Jesus, and yet all differing from each other. The second verse of the first chapter of Romans tells us, that the gospel was promised by the prophets in the holy scriptures, but in what part of those prophets it does not condescend to tell us; and I believe it will be very difficult to find it expressly foretold in any one; and as to interpretations when a thing is obscure, any one may interpret as he pleases, and all be in the wrong; the third verse says, that Jesus was of the seed of David according to the flesh; which is impossible, because Joseph, whose pedigree was traced to David, was only his reputed father. This first chapter contains a doctrine unworthy of God and injurious to man; it makes God unjust, and man rebellious; it makes man to sin against the commands of God, and God to punish that which he has created; in short, it either limits the power of God, or makes man greater than his Creator; for if man can sin against the power and commands of his Maker, he is so far more powerful, and as it represents the wrath of God excited against the wickedness of man, it makes the former a weak, angry, and resentful Being.

In reading the history of the Reformation, it

is lamentable to reflect that men, tho' released from the fetters of a most degrading superstition, still remained attached to a system of faith and doctrine little less contradictory to reason than that from which they had departed; and it is really distressing to see the cheerfulness and enthusiasm with which they laid down their lives, in support of a belief in the doctrines and miracles of Christ and his apostles. Let any reasonable man, whose mind is free from early prepossessions, look thro' the epistles of St Paul, and see if his mind does not revolt at the belief of such propositions as these:—“By the deeds of the law shall no man be justified.” *Rom.* chap. iii. verse 20. “Being justified freely thro’ the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth as a propitiation, thro’ faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past.” verse 24, 25. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” verse 28. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God thro’ our Lord Jesus Christ,” chap. v. verse 1. “We glory in tribulation: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the *Holy Ghost*, which is given unto

us." verses 3, 5. "We joy in our God thro' our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement." verse 11. "The free gift is of many unto justification." verse 16.

The doctrine of original sin, one of the most wicked and ridiculous ideas that ever came into the mind of man, is to be found in chap. v. verse 14 to 21. The doctrine of the immediate operation of the Spirit, which has given rise to so many follies of different sects, is to be found in chapter viii. I have no patience to pursue these things any longer, I only intreat every honest man to peruse the epistles of St Paul, and say, if excepting some good and useful precepts, they are not filled with a perpetual repetition of unintelligible doctrines, at which reason revolts, and even faith itself is sometimes staggered. It is impossible not to perceive from 1 Cor. chap. i. verse 17 to 31; and chap. ii. verse 1 to 16. that in order to insure this divine monopoly of nonsense, the apostle proscribes the light of human learning, and the exercise of human reason; with such a writer there can be no argument, nor with those who adopt his opinions. I leave, therefore, the whole of these doctrines to the increasing sense and reason

of mankind to consign them to that oblivion they so justly merit.

The Prayer Book is nothing more than the Romish Mass Book purified and reformed; but how reformed? for it contains some of the most objectionable parts of Popery, and many things contrary not only to the Scriptures, but to the common sense and reason of mankind. The first thing worthy of notice in the Liturgy is the general confession of sins in the Morning Prayer, which makes us perpetual sinners: for if as we are commanded by the law we go to church daily throughout the year, and repeat this confession daily, we never can be supposed to have "attained unto righteousness," but must remain sinners to the end of our lives. The confession is succeeded by a form wholly of Popish origin, and for which no sufficient authority can be found in the Scriptures, for it asserts that "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has given power and commandment *to his Ministers*, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the remission of their sins;" he gave no such commands, but Jesus gave that command to his apostles, who, we are told, were divinely inspired and commissioned; it would be difficult, I believe, to prove any such commission

to be given to any individuals calling themselves the clergy, whether Popish or Protestant. In the apostles' creed we are told many things hard to be believed ;—First, that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost ; secondly, that he descended into hell ; thirdly, we acknowledge that we believe in the Holy Ghost ; (*we ought first to know what it is;*) fourthly, that we believe in the Holy Catholic church ; if that means the whole body of Christians, then we should take care how we persecute one another ; and fifthly, that we believe in the resurrection of the body. If this means the resurrection of that body which is laid in the grave, St Paul has told us directly the reverse ; for he has told us, 1 Cor. chap. xv. verse 50, “ That flesh and blood cannot inherit immortality.”

The creed of St Athanasius, as it is commonly called, which forms a part of the Liturgy, and a material part too, inasmuch as it denounces eternal damnation to all who refuse to acknowledge its divine efficacy, has now, I believe, very few defenders, even among the clergy, for many omit to read it, and many who do, find it hard to swallow and difficult to digest. The Litany, which is commanded to be said or *sung*, tho' it repeats in substance

the faith contained in the creed before mentioned, contains also many things which are a strong reflection on the lives of many nominal Christians. There seems to me a degree of inconsistency and presumption in the prayer following the Litany, in which we intreat God, "to turn from us all those evils which we most *righteously have deserved.*" To acknowledge that we deserve punishment, and to pray against punishment, is somewhat like interfering with the wisdom and justice of the Divinity: the first duty of Christians is submission to the Divine will.

The prayer of St Chrysostom asserts, "that when two or three are gathered together, God has promised to grant their requests." I should like to know where that promise is to be found.

The prayers to be used on particular occasions supposing the world to be governed by an Omnipotent Ruler, are a presumptuous interference with Divine wisdom, dictated by vanity and self-conceit, in supposing that the general order of Providence can be diverted or turned aside for the sake of nations or individuals, and it is impossible to ridicule it too severely. I cannot, however, shew the extreme folly of it more completely than by relating an incident which happened within my own know-

ledge :—A clergyman in a small village west of Doncaster, whose name was Marshall, a man of ancient simplicity, tho' not of ancient wisdom, was asked by one of the farmers in the village, during a very dry summer, to pray for rain, to which he replied with some warmth, “ Do you think I would do such a thing, when my good friend Mr Staniforth has all his hay out ! ” It seems the honest simpleton had no doubt in the efficacy of his prayers, therefore he possessed that which is the chief virtue in every religion, tho' he was deficient in that which is much better than religion. The number of unworthy men admitted into the office of the holy ministry, either proves that God is inattentive to the prayers of the righteous, or that man is more powerful; for in the prayer to be used in the Ember weeks, God is intreated so “ to guide and govern the minds of his servants the bishops, that they may lay hands suddenly on no man, but wisely and honestly make choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry of the church ; and that those who are ordained to the sacred function, may by their lives and doctrine set forward the glory of God, and the salvation of all men.”— How far this is attended to in the ordination of drunkards, fools, and profligates, let their

lordships the bishops ask their own consciences. The thanksgivings for public blessings are dictated by the same spirit of presumptuous ignorance in supposing that God changes the ordinary course of events for the sake of particular persons or nations.

The Collect for the day of *St Michael and all the Angels*, contains these remarkable words: “O God mercifully grant, that as thy holy angels alway do thee service in heaven; so by thy appointment they may succor and defend us on earth.” The doctrine of angels is the most extraordinary of any which is contained in the Christian religion. That there are any such beings as the imagination of painters has drawn in the forms of beautiful women and children, with the wings of an immense bird, exceeds one should think the common pitch of human credulity to believe, and yet there are men who believe in them. For their person and their form we have no warrant from scripture, tho’ their office is there described, and their name is taken from their office, for the Greek word *αγγελος*, which signifies a messenger, we have translated an angel, and hence, the spiritual creations of the imagination are endued with a human form and shape.

The second and third directions for the ad-

ministration of the Lord's Supper, give such an arbitrary and inquisitorial power to ministers over their congregations, that they are now happily become a dead letter; the power is derived no doubt from the words of the scripture, but the circumstances of the early Christians are so inapplicable to modern times, that nothing but the most bigotted ignorance could have confounded the difference. The exhortation of the minister to such as intend to come to the Holy Communion, represents that ceremony in a light so different from the account that is given of it in scripture, as shews that our Liturgy requires to be still further purified from the great and gross errors of Popery. A simple valediction of Christ to his apostles, rendered more impressive under the form of a supper, and intended as a remembrance of his sufferings and affection for them, is both in the Popish and the Protestant Liturgy exalted into a divine mystery, and encompassed with all the terrors of hell and damnation. It is remarkable, that when the priest gives the bread and wine he does not say, "*This is a symbol, of the body, or the blood of Christ,*" but "*The body of our Lord Jesus Christ,*" and "*The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ,*" so that the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the

actual presence, is not quite rooted out of the Protestant communion, and so much holiness is yet attached to the simple elements, that the bread and wine which has been consecrated by the priest are forbidden to be carried out of the church, but the curate or minister, and the people are commanded, "reverently to eat the same." A remnant of superstition no doubt, tho' the Rubric says, that in order "to take away all occasion of dissension or superstition, the bread shall be such as is usually eaten," and yet it goes on to say, "it shall be the best and the *purest* wheat bread that can conveniently be gotten;" no doubt intended as a symbol of Christ's purity, and freedom from sin. It is, however, expressly declared, at the end of the service, that the bread and wine remain still in their natural substances, and therefore may not be adored.

The Baptism of Infants is the next ceremony of the church, contained in our reformed Liturgy, and tho' I will by no means attempt to give an idea of all the controversies the subject has occasioned, yet I cannot omit to remark a few of the most prominent particularities of this anti-christian institution.

In the first place, to shew how much the ceremonies of the church have fallen into

decay, the Rubric remarks, that "It is most convenient that baptism should not be administered but upon Sundays and other holidays, when the most number of people come together, as well for that the congregation there present may testify the receiving them that be newly baptized into the number of Christ's church; as also, because in the baptism of infants, every one present may be put in remembrance of his own profession to God in his baptism. Nevertheless if necessity so require, children may be baptized upon any other day."

The whole ceremony of baptism is not only ridiculous, but unfounded in scripture; infant baptism is not to be found from one end of the New Testament to the other; therefore it is needless to particularize the minor follies of the rite; yet the signing the infant with the sign of the cross, will shew its Popish origin.— It is also worthy of note, that the ceremony is now treated very lightly, and that even orthodox members of the church have few reasons for continuing to observe it, and those totally unconnected with any divine command. The first is for the sake of godfathers and godmothers, who are said very often to be of use to children from worldly considerations; se-

condly, a good dinner; and thirdly, for the sake of having children registered. After signing the child with the sign of the cross, the priest says, "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy holy spirit, to receive it for thine own by adoption, and to incorporate it with thy holy church." Is it possible after this, that the same child should fall from the state of holiness, and become a servant of the devil; if so, where is the efficacy of baptism, or where is the power of the Lord against that of Satan and Sin? How lightly the matter of godfathers and godmothers is treated, may be seen from comparing the promises they make at the font, and the exhortation they receive from the minister, with their actual conduct, or rather their total neglect of the child after the solemn ceremony is performed. The compilers of the Prayer Book, fearful, no doubt, that the terrible doctrine which declares the damnation of infants dying unbaptized, should not be inferred or understood from the words of that service, declare, that "By God's word it is certain, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, *are undoubtedly saved.*" Great then indeed must be the benefit of that cere-

mony, which can save innocent and helpless infants from eternal damnation; but credulous indeed, and dreadfully perverted must be that understanding, which can believe in a doctrine so repugnant to common sense, and to all our ideas of divine and human justice, as the damnation of unbaptized infants; and yet this is the doctrine of our church in the service of baptism, in the articles, and in the homilies—and this doctrine is to be inculcated on infant minds, and to be taught not only in England within the pale of the church, but is thought worthy to be disseminated thro' the whole of the civilized world, by the supporters of National Education. Who can say that with such a doctrine remaining in her books, and avowed by her ministers, the English church requires no reformation? Rejoiced I am, however, to say, that there is one of her ministers, and a bishop too, who has boldly disavowed this doctrine in these energetic words: "A proposition which asserts that infants dying in the womb, or before baptism, (as the passage which his Lordship quotes from Fulgentius imports), will be tormented in everlasting fire, is so entirely subversive of all our natural notions of justice and mercy, that it cannot be admitted, unless a passage in scripture could be produced in

which it is clearly revealed, and I am sensible no such passage can be produced."—*Vide Charge to the Clergy of Landaff, June, 1795, by R. Watson, Lord Bishop of Landaff.*

In the ministration of private baptism, it is required that the child so baptized, if it live, be brought afterwards to the church, and after it hath been certified to the minister that it hath been properly baptized, and nothing essential omitted, the priest then is to say, "I certify to you that all hath been duly performed concerning the baptizing this child ; who being born in original sin, and in the wrath of God, is now by the laver of regeneration in baptism received into the number of God's children." That the Bishop of Landaff should continue a member of the church of England after comparing the words just quoted, with this ceremony, is somewhat difficult to be explained, particularly when it is known that he is possessed of a large fortune independent of his preferment. It is remarkable, that in the ministration of the public baptism of infants, not one passage is produced from the scripture which authorizes the ceremony, as is usual in the other ceremonies of the church which are said to have a scriptural foundation.

The Church Catechism is the next part of

the service which demands our notice, and the answer to the second question contains matter of sufficient importance for serious examination. To this question, "Who gave you that name," the child is instructed to answer, "My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Who can give us an assurance of all these things? and who that believes them, can have any wish, or feel any necessity to become virtuous, being already called to a divine inheritance of which he cannot be deprived. It may be answered, that this inheritance can only be claimed by those who lead a virtuous life; but the ninth article declares that *tho' there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the apostle doth confess, that concupisence and lust have the nature of sin.* And the eleventh article asserts, that "we are accounted just before God, only for the merits of Jesus Christ, and not for our own works or deservings." By the creed the child is taught to say that he believes in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and in the first commandment it is said, thou shalt have none other Gods but me, that is, the one God whom the Jews worship-

ped ; for there is no mention of the Trinity, or three Gods in one, in the Old Testament. The child being questioned as to what he learns by the commandments, among other things, makes answer, " To honor and obey the king, and all that are put in authority under him. To submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters, to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters," of all this not one word is to be found in the ten commandments, either expressed or implied. It is also worthy of remark, that of these ten commandments given to the Jews, the second is by no means applicable to Christians, nor is the character which God gives of himself consistent with that of God under Christianity ; neither do these commandments comprehend the whole of our duty as taught under that system. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholics violate the second commandment, by their frequent bowings and prostrations to the altar, and to their saints and images ; neither are the Protestants wholly exempt from the charge of idolatry, since one of the canons enjoins, that "on going into the church, we should make *three bows* to the altar," which is generally much adorned with sculpture and painting. The fourth commandment, which relates to

the Sabbath, is totally inapplicable to the Christian religion, which allowed no distinction of days, and for which we have the authority of St Paul, *Rom.* xiv., “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth all days alike. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord doth he not regard it.” Which clearly shews that the apostle paid no regard to one day more than to another—besides, the Jewish Sabbath was ordained as a day of rest, in commemoration of God’s having rested from his work of the creation, and was on the seventh day of the week; we keep the Christian Sabbath, tho’ no such day is commanded to be kept in the New Testament, on the first day of the week, in commemoration of Christ’s resurrection—therefore it is a totally different celebration. St Paul tells us also repeatedly, that the ceremonial part of the law was wholly abolished by Christ. That the whole law is fulfilled when we love one another, *Gal.* v. verse 14. “Let no man judge you in respect of meat or drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is Christ,” *Col.* ii. verse 16. That is to say, “These things under the law of Moses were

types or figures of Christ, but now that Christ is come, they are no longer to be observed.” *Gal.* iv., St Paul in setting forth the difference between the law of Moses and that of Christ, expressly tells the converted Jews, “ Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain, verse 10, 11, and he exhorts them, chap. v. verse 1, to get rid of all these ceremonial observances, “ Stand fast therefore,” says he, “ in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.”—For Christ’s opinion of the Sabbath, *vide Mark* chap. ii. and iii. The child is next told to rehearse the Lord’s prayer, not one word of which, if strictly examined, any child can understand, nor even a grown person, if he were called upon to affix a positive idea to the words, for the very first line would stagger him, were he compelled to explain it. When the child is required to say what he desires of God in this prayer, he repeats a number of things, of which the prayer takes no notice—particularly when he says, it desires God “ to defend us from all dangers, ghostly and bodily.” The use of the old word ghost, conveys to children very improper ideas, and frequently lays a foundation for those foolish and frightful notions which are hardly ever

after rooted out ; for the child does not consider, and cannot understand that “ *ghostly* ” means spiritual ; and generally conceives it to be a prayer to defend him from ghosts. To this it may be said, by those who are so zealous to disseminate this ancient formulary of religion, that the expositions of the Catechism will remove this objection. To which I answer, that a Catechism, or summary of religion, which requires an expositor, no longer answers its intention, and I have found that these expositions, being generally ten times as long as the Catechism itself, only make it more difficult to be understood, and explain, according to the Latin phrase, *Ignotum per ignotius*.—“ An unknown thing by one more unknown.” The remainder of this sage compendium is employed in explaining the nature of the two Sacraments of our church, in a way which no child’s capacity can possibly comprehend, and in which there is one very objectionable passage, for it says, that “ The body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received in the Lord’s Supper.”

The ceremony of Confirmation seems intended to finish that which baptism had left incomplete, for children are therein called upon to promise *that* for themselves, which their

godfathers and godmothers had before promised in their name. Would it not be much better that every one should be left to years of discretion, before he takes upon himself the profession of a Christian? Undoubtedly it would, for in that case his Christianity would be the result of reason and conviction, whereas at present it is merely the force of an early impression formed before the period of reflection, and consequently more powerful than just; but this would not suit the priests, whose whole influence rests on these irrational impressions formed in our early youth.

The service of Matrimony, as performed in our church, has no countenance from scripture, and, therefore, ought not to be regarded as a religious institution; it is a natural union confirmed by a civil rite, but never was considered as a religious ceremony till priests became a distinct order in the church, and engrossed as much power as they possibly could, under pretence of religion; the rite is acknowledged both by Christ and his apostles, but none of them say how it is to be performed.— It is a sacred and solemn union of infinite use in society, and, therefore, not lightly to be violated, but it is by no means an indissoluble bond, or as the Roman Catholics consider it,

a religious sacrament. The three reasons for the institution of matrimony are now generally omitted to be read by the priest, as not suited to the delicacy of modern females, tho' they were not thought improper to be read in times of ancient simplicity, when females were more virtuous, tho' less delicate. Most clergymen also more properly omit the prayer which calls matrimony "*a sacred mystery, in which is represented the spiritual union between Christ and his church,*" and declares that "*It is not lawful that it ever should be put asunder,*" because the first is ridiculous, and the second is contrary to the words of Jesus Christ, to the doctrine of the church, and to the practice of the House of Lords. In the same prayer it is also said, that God made man *after his own image and similitude.* If man is like God, then God must be like man, and thus we acquire a gross and ridiculous idea of a Deity in personal form and shape; and as such he is represented by the Roman Catholic church, in various paintings and sculptures, as an old man with a long beard. The direction at the end about receiving the sacrament the first time possible after matrimony, is seldom attended to.

The Visitation of the Sick is, in my opinion,

the most objectionable part of the whole Prayer Book, because it gives a degree of power to the priest which no man ought to possess over another. The first passage that strikes me as particularly objectionable, is that which says, "There should be no greater comfort to Christian persons, than to be like unto Christ, by suffering patiently adversities, trouble, and sickness." Reason and philosophy teach us to bear our sufferings with mildness and resignation, but a religion which attempts to make them a source of comfort to us, attempts to counteract and subdue the powers of nature, and make us ridiculous enthusiasts. The directions of the Rubric, which exhort the sick person to dispose of his worldly goods, and to declare his debts for the discharge of his conscience; to make a special confession of his sins to the priest, and the form which empowers the priest to acquit him of his sins, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are neither more nor less than Popery; and, therefore, I believe, are very seldom, if ever, attended to. The prayer in the Visitation of the Sick, beginning, "O most merciful God," intreats the Lord to renew in the sick man, "whatsoever hath been decayed by the fraud and malice of the devil, or by his

own carnal will and frailness ;" a passage which is faulty as to grammar, in making the verb *decay* a verb passive, which is a verb neuter. A more serious error is that of ascribing to the personal operation of the Devil, that which is the effect of our own frail nature ; for the Devil, properly speaking, is only our lusts and passions personified.

The Burial Service contains little that can be objected to as a form of words, if any form of words be requisite on committing a dead body to the ground, but that part of it which declares that the deceased, whether saint or sinner, is buried "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, thro' Jesus Christ," gave rise to the witty Epigram of Prior, on the funeral of the Duke of Buckingham, a man not celebrated for his chastity or piety.

The Office for Churching Women can do little good, and little harm, except when it takes a female too soon into a cold church, out of a warm house. The direction for the woman to offer accustomed offerings, is borrowed from the purifications of the Jewish law.

The Commination Service, as it is taken chiefly out of the Jewish Scriptures, is by no means suited to a Christian Liturgy, and indeed

is a scandal to any religion, particularly to Christians, who are expressly told by their Lord and Master Jesus Christ, “to bless, and curse not;” in short, nothing can be more ridiculous, nor more wicked, than after cursing sinners with all kind of curses, to invoke on ourselves all kind of blessings. The man that can coolly attend and repeat this service, must either not consider what he is about, or be the most cold-hearted, uncharitable wretch that God ever created, and possessed of a spirit totally remote from that of Christianity, which tells us, “Judge not that ye be not judged.” In this ceremony also is expressed a pious wish that the Popish ceremony of penance may be revived. That wish has not yet been accomplished, and I should hope that it never may.

The stile of priestly adulation which pervades the whole of the service on the Martyrdom, as it is called, of Charles I. and the Thanksgiving for the Restoration of Charles II. is totally opposite to the free principles of the British Constitution, and ought for ever to be expunged from the Prayer Book. To say that nothing can expiate the blood of king Charles but the blood of Jesus Christ, is little short of blasphemy. To mention Charles II. among the number of “righteous

and religious kings whom God hath miraculously preserved," is an excess of servility hardly to be expected even from the well known disposition of the clergy to flatter the royal dispensers of preferment, and such prayers and thanksgivings, if early impressed on the minds of youth, must have a tendency to form them to obsequiousness and dissimulation. The doctrine of divine hereditary right to the crown, was solemnly abjured by the Parliament at the Revolution in 1688, and king William was placed on the throne by the choice of the people; for tho' the succession was preserved in Mary, yet William had no claim by *his blood* to the throne; the clergy, however, could not so soon forget their beloved doctrine of divine right, and, therefore, the prayers of the church were continued, in which William was substituted for Charles, and declared to have his authority from God, and the people to serve him, not for their own sake but for God's, "that he knowing whose minister he is, may above all things seek thy honor and glory; and that we and all his subjects duly considering whose authority he hath, may serve, honor, and humbly obey him, in thee, and for thee."

Having now gone thro' the whole of the Church of England Prayer Book, I put it to

the sober judgment and conscience of every honest man, whether he thinks this service in all its parts, or even considering its general spirit, is worthy of extensive dissemination; and whether he who thinks otherwise, is justified in contributing to the extraordinary measures which are now using to put it in the hands of all ranks and stations; if not, let him consider whether some more rational and less objectionable formulary should not be substituted in its room, or whether after the general principles of instruction are extensively diffused, men may not be left to themselves in selecting such books of religion and morality, as are likely to impress them with notions more pure and undefiled. Having said thus much on the pretensions of the Bible and the Prayer Book to be generally circulated, I cannot altogether forbear making a few remarks on the controversies which the societies for their dissemination have occasioned; and I am sorry to be compelled to say, that the spirit with which they have been conducted, proves that Christianity has not succeeded in mitigating the violent passions of *all* its professors, but that even Churchmen continue to be actuated in mere matters of opinion by a spirit of bigotry and persecution, which shews that they have

the will, if they had the power, to silence their opponents by much stronger arguments than pen and ink can convey. Christ himself told us that he came not to send peace upon earth, but a sword; and his words have been most strictly fulfilled. We have reason, however, to thank the spirit of philosophy, that Christians have not the same power to persecute each other which they had two hundred years ago. Dr. Marsh, who takes the lead in the controversy about Bibles and Prayer Books, is a true Churchman, and as a Churchman I must say he has the better side of the argument with the Editor of the British Review; for how any man who professes to be attached to the Church and the Liturgy can object to the latter being disseminated with the Bible, or defend the omission of it, I am at a loss to determine; I only lament the acrimonious spirit with which Dr. Marsh treats his opponents, and I cannot but allow that they are undermining the Establishment, notwithstanding all their plausible arguments to the contrary; for who that pretends to respect the Liturgy as an orthodox manual of divinity, can suffer the Bible to be put into the hands of all people indiscriminately, without such a guide to their understanding? Not those, surely, who think that the Bible is a book capable of being variously interpreted according to each man's

fancy or early impressions: orthodox churchmen, therefore, must undoubtedly wish, and should earnestly strive, that the Prayer Book and the Homilies should always accompany it, as the best interpretation of it, and as tending to keep down the growth of heresy and schism; for they who are allowed to read the Bible by itself will form their own opinions of it. For my part, I rejoice that so many Bibles have been distributed without any such orthodox companions, because I believe if the Bible can be read impartially, and without any pre-conceived notions, the morality it contains will find its way to the uncorrupted understandings of all men, while its doctrines will be left only to puzzle divines; and its monstrous improbabilities are so revolting to human reason, that they could never be received by it without previous training and instruction. Let the Bible therefore be disseminated as widely as possible, without gloss or comment, and even if it sometimes does harm, it will do much good—for there is no book extant, of its size, which contains more entertaining history, nor more useful morality; but never let it be forced upon any description of people, let all nations have the means of reading it if they will, but let no undue means be used to put it in the hands of those who have no wish for it. The English nation is the most combustible,

the most easily set on fire of any nation upon earth; and as a proof of this, it is truly ridiculous to see the prevalence of fashion in the rapid increase of Bible Societies. I am far from wishing to discountenance or ridicule the perusal of the Bible, for when read without any religious bias, it cannot fail to be useful: but to see men of all ranks and descriptions, of the most opposite habits, sentiments, and persuasions, uniting to cram the Bible down the throats of all nations, people, and languages, with undiscriminating violence; to see men the most profligate in their private conduct, the most open despisers of religion in their lives and conversations, men who have never read one word of the Bible since they were at school, and hardly know what it contains,—to see all these men, and women too, hurrying to subscribe to what in their hearts they care not one farthing about, is just as ridiculous as to see them crowding to a ball or a masquerade.

By those who are unwisely sanguine as to the improvement of human nature, the Lancasterian System of Education is held up as the *panacea* or universal remedy for all the evils of society; and we are very confidently told, both by Christians and Philosophers, that when all men are taught to read and write, there will be no more crimes, no more vice, no more misery in the world.—

Believing as I firmly do, that these things are inherent in the system, as correctives of the great original defect, I am not so earnest in my hopes of general melioration, or sanguine as many of my friends, in believing that we have arrived at the commencement of a new *aera*; for I do believe, that even after all men, women and children are taught to read and write, there will still be much vice and misery in the world—nevertheless, I will cheerfully contribute my mite towards the expense of educating the children of the poor, and my opinion as to further improvement in educating the rich, for all the vices of society are not to be found in the lower ranks.

The different merits of the two Schools of Bell and Lancaster, though they have occasioned much controversy, and wasted much paper, require no very long discussion :—as to their separate claims to originality, those may be also very soon settled; for neither of them is original, if we regard the first rudiments of the invention, though Bell reduced them to a system before Lancaster, who had conceived the idea before he had heard of Bell, and then improved and extended what he found (by his own acknowledgement) to have been practised before he opened his first school. Though the claim of priority as to time is allowed to Dr. Bell, no impartial person, I think, can doubt that

the merit of propagating the System is due to Lancaster; for till his improvements had been long practised, and began to excite the alarm of the Established Church, even Dr. Bell himself had not troubled his head about his own System. In such a controversy it is a great matter to lay hold of a few facts, and this I trust is one which cannot be controverted. The ignorance of Dr. Bell in claiming for himself the merit of complete originality, has been fully proved by the very learned Mr. Ensor, in his National Education; and I rejoice at any time to see ignorance, when combined with presumption, exposed to contempt.—“Were these documents and facts suppressed, it is not impossible to conceive that at some future period, a question might arise in regard to the origin of this System of Tuition, by which one master may teach a thousand or more scholars, that it may fare with this discovery as it has fared with many other discoveries, and that future and foreign writers may arise and claim to themselves, what did not originate with them.” *Vide Bell’s Elements of Tuition*, p. 127. Mr. Ensor has quoted from Bentham’s *Traité de Legislation*, an account of a school at Paris, established by the Chevalier Paulet many years before the Revolution, in which the boys were employed mutually to instruct each other, and were governed also by themselves, the

younger boys being placed under the inspection of the older.

Xenophon also mentions something of the same kind, but not in the passage quoted by Mr. Ensor, *de Inst. Cyri*, for the word *γεραιτεροι* in that passage does not mean *the older boys*, but *the old men*, as will be seen by a reference to the preceding sentence; but Xenophon in his account of the Republic of Sparta says, “That when no full grown man was present, that the boys might not be without a ruler, Lycurgus placed the cleverest boy in every class to take care of the others.”—*Vide Xenoph. de Repub. Laced. cap. 2. 12. Ed. Zeunii.* No doubt the first rudiments of that system which Dr. Bell and Lancaster simultaneously extended, are to be found in this passage of Xenophon, in Paulet’s institution at Paris, and in every great school that ever existed; but they have each the merit of having reduced to a System that which before lay scattered in its rude and hidden elements. Now with regard to the separate merits of their different schemes, I must say I prefer Bell’s for its simplicity, and Lancaster’s for its cheapness, though I detest the multitude of degrading, cruel, and ridiculous punishments with which it is debased; and I doubt that in both, the method of making boys masters will make them tyrannical, arbitrary, and oppressive. Dr. Bell’s,

as being exclusively devoted to the Establishment (as if children were never to read any thing but prayer books and religious tracts), I dislike for its narrow-minded principle, and also for the doubts which he has expressed whether the children of the poor ought to learn writing and arithmetic ; because there is not any situation in life, even that of the poorest labourer, where these may not be of use, nay, are not positively requisite. I regret that a man of such extensive learning and liberal principles as Mr. Ensor, should have degraded himself by the asperity with which he speaks of Dr. Bell, and the unjust partiality he every where shows to Lancaster ; for Lancaster, though his system has the merit of teaching no sectarian principles of religion, has shown much vanity and conceit in puffing himself and his school, and is by no means free from that spiritual pride which Christ has so strongly censured and forbidden ; he is however on the whole one of those extraordinary beings, who now and then arise to give a fresh impulse and direction to the minds of men. The opposition which this system has experienced from the bigoted and interested members of the Establishment, affords a fresh proof if any were wanting to demonstrate the evils of these institutions, which like corporations in the infancy of trade, though they might origi-

nally have been of use in propagating instruction and knowledge, as the others were in protecting and fostering commerce, now materially diminish the circulation of that which they were originally intended to preserve and extend. The attempt to revive the Book of Homilies must utterly fail, if there is any such thing as common sense left in the people of England; for though they might once be considered as containing sound doctrine and wholesome instruction, yet they can now only be considered as being for the most part unintelligible, and wholly superseded by the use of sermons, which were in former times very rare.

To those who, like myself, consider the Bible as a mere human composition, containing much wisdom and much folly, the eighth article in the seventh Number of the British Review must afford a very considerable treat; it gives the substance of two pamphlets written by two clergymen of the established church, one of whom believes only so much of the Bible as he finds consistent with his reason, and the other believes it all. These pamphlets give us a melancholy proof on the one hand of a sacrifice of conscience to interest, and on the other of reason to scripture. Dr. Maltby is unwilling to put the Bible into the hands of the unlearned, lest they should abuse it by fanaticism and superstition, doubtless because

he believes it liable to be so abused. Mr. Cunningham insists that all men have a right to read the divine word, because all are promised the assistance of the spirit to understand its spiritual meaning. Of these two divines I have little hesitation in saying which is the most reasonable, and still less in saying which is most honest.

According to Dr. Maltby, the use of an Established Church consists in expounding those passages of the Bible which it requires the aid of human learning and good sense to understand. According to his opponent, there can be no use for any church at all; because, if the aid of the spirit is vouchsafed to all those who sincerely ask it, the Bible may be *spiritually* understood,—therefore a cobler may be as good a teacher as a doctor of divinity. Mr. Cunningham boasts, that by the revival of this doctrine, “our churches again begin to be filled, and the people return to their allegiance.” If so, it is only a further proof of the ignorant and irrational state of the people, when they will listen to none but those who preach to them what they cannot understand; for what man can reconcile to his reason the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Satisfaction of the Cross, the Mediatorial Intercession, the Influence of the Spirit, and the Eternity of future punishment? all which are to be found in St. Paul’s epistles,

and consequently are taught by the church of England. Dr. Maltby more wisely, but I will not say more honestly, would exclude common people from all access to the greater part of these epistles, asserting that they contain "*many things hard to be understood,*" and many things not applicable to Christians of the present times.—In this attempt (I will not say a laudable one) to make the Christian religion more reasonable, Dr. Maltby can never succeed with those who believe in the divine origin of Christianity ; it is impossible to cut and carve it so as to please all palates ; it must either be wholly received, or wholly rejected, as a divine revelation ; this miserable compromise between reason and interest, can neither make the religion nor its ministers respectable ; and those men who attempt it, only show what they would do, if they were not afraid of resigning their livings. Dr. Maltby has shown us that an Establishment is requisite to make Christianity seem what it is not, a rational system of belief ; and Mr. Cunningham has shown us that there is no such necessity, inasmuch as Christianity cannot be comprehended merely by human reason, but requires the aid of inspiration. Dr. Maltby seems to place the whole merit of Christianity in its moral precepts, and uses the name of God very sparingly ; Mr. Cunningham says, that moral pre-

cepts are nothing without doctrines, and talks of God as familiarly as if he were a man like himself. It is in truth almost incredible, that any man should be found in this enlightened age, who believes that the Deity exists in a human form, and once descended on the earth ; yet Mr. C. tells us, that Christianity displays "*God himself employed in the duties of man,*" and "that God has marked his abhorrence of an attempt to separate the study of divine books, by the errors resulting from this separation." It is utterly impossible to defend Christianity, as a divine revelation, against the daily advancing reason of mankind ; and, therefore, its advocates would be wise in defending no more of it than is fairly defensible. Let them maintain that it contains many good and useful precepts, conveyed both singly and in parables ; that it is capable of doing much good to mankind when divested of its divine pretensions ; and let them allow that these pretensions have been the cause of the principal evils it has occasioned.

Hartford, near Morpeth, Oct. 3d, 1813.

NOTES

TO

MATERIALS FOR THINKING.

THE STATE OF SOCIETY.

P. 1. “*The life of man is.*” The wretchedness of man is a subject of lamentation to be found in almost all the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew writers.—The whole may be summed up in a line and a half of Mimnermus :

οὐδὲ τις εστιν

Αὐθεωπων, ω Ζευς, μη κακα πολλα διδω.

The Thracians used to lament over those who were born, and to rejoice when they died.

Vide Herod. and Anthol. Ed. Bosch, vol. 1. p. 54.

No one has more pathetically lamented the shortness and misery of human life than Sophocles in that beautiful chorus to the *Oedipus Coloneus*, which begins

Οστις του πλεονος μερους

Xρηξει. lin. 1275.

The same idea also in the *Trachiniæ*:

αναλγητα γαρ ου

δο παντων κραινων βασιλευς

Επεβαλε θυατοις Κρονιδαρ.

l. 128. p. 502. *Ed. Vauvilliers.*

It was an opinion common among the ancients of all nations, that the gods were jealous of human happiness, and thus they account for the misery of man.—It is at least a strong proof of the fact, though a bad account of the cause.

Vide Herod. lib. 7. c. 46. Aristoph. Plut. l. 879. 3 Ed.

Brunchii Oxon. Vell. Patrc. p. 15. Ed. Delph.

P. 2. “*A radical defect in the system.*” For what purposes the world was formed as it is, I leave to those who are “hand in glove with Providence” to find out; I pretend not to dive into mysteries; and to me at least they are not revealed.

P. 2. “*The disproportion.*” The evidence of this fact rests on the authority of Mr. Malthus, who, in his Essay on Population, has laid it down as the foundation of all his subsequent reasoning upon the subject, and proved it by various details from ancient and modern history, and the present state of the world; I recommend his book to every man who wishes for full and complete information on so important a topic. Though there have been many attempts to overturn his system, none have yet succeeded, for it is founded on facts; and they who deny that the principle of population can ever produce the effect he has stated, till the world is completely full, must have omitted to read his details, which prove, that every country is to be considered as a world of itself; for in every country there is a constant struggle between population and the means of subsistence. Whether Mr. Malthus saw the full extent to which his doctrine was capable of being pushed, is not for me to determine, nor for him as a clergyman to avow—he employed it only for the uses of political œconomy, I have attempted to extend it to a philosophical research, as it seems capable of accounting for the origin of evil; (a mystery which has

been hitherto hidden both from divines and philosophers;) and to me it affords an easy solution of every difficulty in the moral government of the world, for which few men have hitherto ventured to account, and no man in the method now mentioned.

P. 4. "*To shorten.*" The period to which most men's lives are capable of being extended seems not to be less than a hundred years, were they not shortened by their own imprudence and the villany of others; for, besides those who die by intemperance, thousands have their existence abridged by the adulteration of what they eat and drink; for such has ever been the general laxness of morality, that few men consider the injury they do to others, provided they can make money by it themselves, and never scruple to adulterate all that can be adulterated, with ingredients neither wholesome nor innocent. David and Solon have fixed the term of human life at seventy years. *Vide Psalms, and Herodotus, lib. I. cap. 82.* According to the bills of mortality in England, of those who live above two years, more die between forty and fifty than at any other period.

P. 5. "*Happiness.*" A book has lately been published, in which it is maintained with a singular affectation of paradox, that happiness neither is nor ought to be the object of human pursuit, and that knowledge is the only thing to be desired. I will give the author's meaning in his own words: "It appears to me, then, that the great object which the human race ought to pursue, and the attainment of which they ought to regard as the business of their lives, is not to produce happiness, pleasure, or felicity in themselves or others; but that, on the contrary, the end for which they were formed, and which alone they can pursue with success, is the improvement of their whole intellectual faculties, whether speculative or active. In one word, it is

the business of man in this world to become an excellent being, possessing high powers of energy and intelligence. This is his chief good, and ought to be the great and ultimate object of his pursuit, to which every other consideration should be sacrificed."

Vide Forsyth's Principles of Moral Science, vol. i. p. 9.

It seems to me that this author confounds the means with the end ; for though men admire knowledge, and give praise to activity and energy of mind, yet it is only because they consider these things as conducive to happiness, or the means of gaining the object of their pursuit ; and though it certainly happens that all men fall short of the goal at which they arrive, it by no means follows that they ought not to desire it, or that their minds and faculties are not so formed as to make it constantly their aim.

Livii Hist. lib. 5. c. 21.

P. 9. "*The state of the world.*" To all general rules there must be exceptions, because no two men can ever be placed in the same circumstances : when they are nearly the same, the same rules may be adhered to ; when they differ widely, the general rule must be abandoned, and men permitted to act according to the exigency of the case ; under this restriction, that it must be with an evidently good design, that is to say, that the good they do by violating the rule will outweigh the bad, or rather obviate the evil that would have attended its observance.

P. 12. "*Mutability.*" It is from hence that we must look for the principle upon which is founded the love of antiquity. Whatever has remained for a great length of time in the same state, seems to have been exempted from that sweeping devastation which carries off in the course of years all the works of Art and Nature : those things which have for the greatest length of time resisted that torrent,

become rare and wonderful ; if they are also beautiful, they have a further claim on our admiration.

P. 12. "*The constant tendency.*" Considering the principle and effects of population, there is little reason to rejoice at the boasted discovery of the cow-pox ; for as it is evident that a certain number of people in every country, in proportion to the population, must die in a given space of time, it is a matter of little consequence whether they die by the small-pox or the scarlet-fever, for the cow-pox can only preserve them from one kind of infection, and perhaps may render them susceptible of others more loathsome and extensive.—Population, when too crowded, will force its way out, and the cow-pox can no more prevent that, than it can prevent fire from burning, water from finding its level, or the wicked from being unhappy. A more serious charge against it is, that of having introduced certain scurfy eruptions on the heads of children, which were before totally unknown.

P. 13. "*Nature will ever.*"

Ἡ φύσις πασῆς τεχνῆς
Αρχεγονον εστ', αρχεγονον ω αλιτηρίος
Ουκ εστιν οὐθεν του πονειν σοφωτερού.

Athen. l. 3. Ed. Schweigh.

P. 14. "*Enormous property.*" Though immense property in few hands, is adverse both to population and happiness, yet the contrary extreme has also its disadvantages ; nature in every thing loves the medium—it is the *ne plus ultra* of enjoyment. Arthur Young, at a time when he could not be suspected of any thing hostile to general liberty and happiness, has shown the evil tendency of too small properties, both as affecting population and comfort.

Vide Travels in France, vol. ii. p. 406.

P. 14. "*The only just and practicable method.*" Though it is impossible, in a free state, to define the precise limit for the increase of property, yet it is right to lay as many checks as possible on posthumous accumulation; and where individuals devise their property seemingly for no other purpose, it is right that the law should interfere upon a principle of natural equity, and prevent any man from doing an evil beyond his life, which Nature has also prevented. Large estates possessed by men who never see them, are certainly an evil of the greatest magnitude; not only from the oppression they create, but because such estates are never half cultivated. I recommend to my readers the perusal of Mr. Hargrave's Argument on the Will of Mr. Thel-lusson.—It is copious, elegant, and forcible.

P. 15. "*To destroy.*" Daines Barrington, in his Remarks on the more antient Statutes, a book in which the dry antiquarian prevails over the philosopher, has some severe strictures on the iniquity of this custom: "Younger children," says he, "are not in this country exposed as they were among the Greeks and Romans: but the very scanty provision made for them in comparison with the eldest son, seems to approach nearly to this barbarity."

P. 18. "*Laws and regulations.*" Among many burdens which are imposed on the lower ranks of society by the authority of the great, none is more oppressive than that of quartering soldiers upon publicans*, many of whom are hardly able to gain a living; and on this account the erection of barracks may be defended, as removing a severe

* Vide Debates on the quartering of soldiers upon publicans.—The speeches of General Wade and Mr. Pulteney. Cobbett's Parliamentary Register, vol. xi.

grievance from a numerous and industrious body of men : but the military establishment would be much improved if the soldier and the citizen were never separated—the volunteer system has proved how far they are capable of being united: Another very burdensome service is imposed on the lower ranks of the people, for which they are by no means sufficiently indemnified, I mean in executing the office of constable ; for while the great enjoy their enormous wealth undisturbed, a poor man is called from the laborious employment by which he gains a maintenance, to protect the peace and property of others, and is neither sufficiently rewarded for the risk of his person nor the loss of his time; a sum at least adequate to his loss and trouble ought to be allowed, which I believe very seldom happens. The duty of 8*l.* for a hawker or pedlar travelling with a horse, is a severe tax on honest industry, though said to be for the protection of regular traders ; but there can certainly be no good reason given why one man should not be allowed to exercise his trade by going round the country, as well as another who is stationary, if his goods are obtained honestly. Another great grievance of the lower ranks is that of not being allowed to keep a horse for any other purpose than that of their immediate occupation ; so that a miller, a butcher, or a baker, cannot use his horse to visit a friend at a distance, nor in many cases of the most urgent necessity, without having it taxed to the same amount as that of a horse kept solely for pleasure. Another severe hardship to which the poor are compelled to submit, is the low rate of wages in many trades and employments, because they are forbidden, under pain of heavy punishments, to confer with each other on the means of redress, even moderately, soberly, and peaceably. These are a few of the grievances imposed on the lower ranks by the legislative power of their

superiors : the list might be much lengthened, but every man's knowledge of the state of society will enable him to supply the remainder.

P. 23. "*To the remains.*" My reader is referred for a full developement of this system to Gilbert Stuart's View of the Progress of Society in Europe, and to Montesquieu's *Esprit de Loix*, lib. 30, 31.

P. 24. "*The servile.*" The aristocratical spirit extends itself to the remotest branches of the independent gentry, and even they whose fortunes have been formed by trade, forget their origin, and assume the airs of high birth. The little aristocracy of a country town is often truly ludicrous ; they give themselves as many airs as if they were descended from John of Ghent.

P. 28. "*Corrupted.*" The Comedies of Aristophanes are a proof of the grossness which arises from the separation of the sexes in society ; the delicate indecency of the *Pucelle d'Orleans* is the fruit of their licentious intercourse, the different shades of which are to be found in the *Decameron* of Boccacio and the plays of Shakspeare. A state of comparative refinement alone could have produced the epistle of Eloisa to Abelard, but a true respect for female modesty forbids even indecent allusions in the presence of women.

P. 36. "*The laity.*" The Free Thinking Christian's Magazine, which is published for the express purpose of putting an end to that distinction and restoring genuine Christianity, forms an æra in the History of Toleration. In the year 1793 the idea first struck me ; I mentioned it, through my valued friend John Tweddell, to Dr. Parr ; he ridiculed the notion, and requested me to desist from prosecuting the inquiry.

Vide Free Thinking Magazine, vol. i. p. 262.

P. 36. "*Atheism.*" As a proof of the increased liberality of mankind, I need only cite a few instances of the persecution of Atheists in former times. The Athenians sought to try Diagoras the Melian for Atheism, but he fled from Athens, and a price was set upon his head.—*Diod. Sic. lib. 13. cap. 6.* Protagoras was banished from Athens, and his books burnt, because he ventured to assert that he knew nothing about the gods, whether there were gods, or whether there were none.—*Vide Cicero de Nat. Deorum,* a curious Treatise, which shows, that almost all the heathen philosophers considered God and the universe as the same thing. Doletus was burnt at Paris 1546 for Atheism; Vanini was burnt at Paris 1621; and Bayle fled to Holland 1681; Casimir Lisinski was executed at Grodno 1689; and Akenhead at Edinburgh 1697; and the body of David Hume, in 1775, was obliged to be watched many nights by his friends, lest it should be taken up by the fanatics; who considered one of the most amiable men that ever existed, as a monster of iniquity, because he did not believe what they believed.—Hence we see that all religions are intolerant, even Deism cannot be excepted.

P. 37. "*Ancient.*" Solomon in his Ecclesiastes, chapter ix. ver. 11. is a strong acknowledgement of the power of necessity.

P. 37. "*Moderns.*" Montaigne and Charron, among the French, and Wollaston in his Religion of Nature, have shown themselves somewhat superior to vulgar opinions; the latter is one of the most enlightened of Christian philosophers, and had he dared to shake off Christianity, would have been an Atheist. The doctrine of Necessity he was by no means a stranger to; for he says, "that though man is a free agent, he may not be free as to every thing: his

freedom may be restrained, and be only accountable for those acts in respect of which he is free," p. 107. "God," he says, "exists by necessity, he cannot but be," p. 68. I recommend the whole of his Treatise to every candid and dispassionate Christian. It says all that can be said to prove the existence of a Deity, and it shows how little that tends to satisfy our reason.

P. 39. "*The ill treatment.*" The laws of England afford little protection to household servants against the tyranny and injustice of their masters; for it is in every man's power to dismiss his servant, without paying his wages, whenever he pleases, either from caprice or villainy, and the servant has no means of redress but by the tedious and expensive process of a law-suit. In many other instances such servants are too much in the power of their masters; those in trade or husbandry have an easier and cheaper remedy when they are oppressed.

P. 43. "*Like passions.*" A Grecian philosopher says, "We should consider our servants as unfortunate friends."

P. 49. "*Insufficient wages.*" The late James Boswell, a worthy but a weak man, in the first volume of his Life of Johnson tells us, that he once put a question to the great philosopher which he was unable to resolve, nor had he ever found any man who could. The question, which any child might have answered, was, "Why women servants, who work harder than men, and have to find their own clothes into the bargain, have less wages?" The answer is obvious—"Because women do not hold their proper rank in society." Mary Wollstonecraft would have answered him in a moment. p. 339. edit. 4to.

P. 53. "*A state of nature.*" The influence which these dreams of benevolence had in bringing about the French

revolution seems now to be on the decline, and men begin to be convinced that society, with all its evils, is much to be preferred to that solitary, unsocial state, which some romantic minds had imagined. Raynal, one of the most ardent patrons of the sect, lived to see his own ideas burlesqued, and retracted some of his benevolent errors as the only atonement he could make to society for the mischiefs which his notions had occasioned.

P. 54. "*Nation robbing nation.*" There are three kinds of robbing, viz. robbing by law, by force, and by fraud :—of all that is taken from us by government, beyond what is requisite for its maintenance and support; we are robbed by law ; robbing by force is that which is committed by individuals, and therefore punished by law. Some frauds are punishable, and punished by law, and many are not.

P. 54. "*Consideration.*" I have suffered, like Prometheus, for doing good to others ; and of me also it may be said,

Τοιαυτ' απηγρω του φιλανθρωπου τροπου.

Æsch. Prometh. l. 27.

P. 56. "*Contemptuously called the mob.*" To civilize the mob may appear to some a hopeless, and to others a ridiculous attempt ; yet who that considers the progressive nature of human improvement will venture to say that it is impossible ? We hear of countries where no such degrading distinction exists, at least where the lower ranks are enlightened, virtuous, and polished. The Account of the Embassy to Ava, contains many proofs, that a distinction of ranks is thoroughly compatible with the improvement of the vulgar, and that the reason which is common to all, is in all capable of being cultivated. " Their laws are wise, (meaning the Birman,) and pregnant with sound morality ;

their police is better regulated than in most European countries ; their natural disposition is friendly, and hospitable to strangers ; and their manners rather expressive of manly candour than courteous dissimulation ; the gradations of rank, and the respect due to station, are maintained with a scrupulosity that never relaxes. A knowledge of letters is so widely diffused, that there are no mechanics, few of the peasantry, or even the common watermen (usually the most illiterate class) who cannot write and read in the vulgar tongue.” *Symes’s Embassy to Ava.*

“ It was a spectacle not less pleasing than novel to Europeans to witness such a concourse of people, *of all classes*, brought together for the purposes of hilarity and sport, without their committing any one act of intemperance, or being disgraced by a single instance of intoxication.” Blush, Britons, at the relation, and learn decency from a people whom you reckon uncivilized ! The author proceeds : “ What scenes of riot and debauchery would not a similar festival in the vicinity of any capital town of Great Britain inevitably produce ! ” The reflection is humiliating to an Englishman, however proud he may feel of the national character. *Ditto*, vol. ii. p. 35.—“ Free from restraint among themselves, the Birmans scruple not to go into your house without ceremony, although an utter stranger. They do not attempt to open a door, and where a curtain dropped, denotes privacy, they never offer to violate the barrier.” Vol. ii. p. 37.—“ In all my excursions I never once experienced insult or molestation : curiosity and astonishment were often expressed, but unaccompanied by personal incivility, or the slightest indication of contempt.” Vol. ii. p. 51.—“ All kiums, or monasteries, whether in town or country, are seminaries for the education of youth, in which

boys of a certain age are taught their letters, and instructed in moral and religious duties. To these schools the neighbouring villagers send their children, where they are educated gratis; no distinction between the son of a peasant and him who wears the tsalve, or mark of nobility." Vol. ii. p. 81. "Houses in cities or villages differ very little." Vol. ii. p. 165. The striking difference between the pompous residences of the rich, and the mud walls of the peasant in Great Britain and Ireland, is shocking to humanity.—"There are capacious granaries belonging to the king, which are always kept filled with grain, ready to be transported to any part of the empire in which there happens a scarcity: this wise and humane institution strongly evinces the solicitude of the monarch for the welfare of his people." Vol. ii. p. 166.—"An English officer, dressed in uniform, was a phænomenon perhaps never before seen in this part of the world. Whichever way I turned, they respectfully opened, and the most forward were restrained by others. Had I entered a house, I have no doubt of the owners offering me the best it contained. Kindness to strangers is equally the precept and the custom of the Birmans." Vide p. 180. The subordination of rank is maintained by the Birmans with the most tenacious strictness. Vol. ii. p. 189.

These extracts ought to convince us, that inequality of rank and general civilization are thoroughly compatible, if it were not evident from the nature of things that "To whomsoever nature hath given the exercise of reason, she hath given the means of becoming a moral agent."—*Drummond's Review of the Government of Sparta and Athens*, p. 69.

P. 56. “*There are some honest men.*”

Ω^Ω φίλοι οὐκ αὖ πάντες υπερβούσι αὐθες ευσιν,
Οὐδὲ ευεργεσίας αμημονεῖ.

Apoll. Rhod. 2.

The whole of this interesting story of Phineus and Paræbion is told with that lively and pathetic simplicity which so much distinguish this beautifully narrative poet. He excels in description, but to the name of an epic poet he has no claim.

P. 57. “*In friendly circles.*” The distinction of ranks in society is perhaps more strictly preserved in England than in any other country, for no where are people so nice in choosing their company; this is certainly illiberal, and a great obstacle to that general diffusion of knowledge and improvement which arises from the interchange of ideas among men of different ranks in society. The state of conversation in Russia is by no means refined, yet no obstacle to its improvement arises from the separation of ranks; for Storch, in his animated Picture of Petersburgh, tells us, that “one peculiar advantage is the mixture of all ranks and countries, of all religious denominations, and the most different manners, habits, and humours. The first great benefit arising from this amalgamation of mankind is a mutual toleration. Riches are here no recommendation; if a certain ease of deportment is not wanting, and a man discover no marks of poverty that offend the common rules of decorum, it is all that is required.” I recommend the whole chapter on the state of society in Russia to be read attentively.

P. 64. “*Fashion.*” Seneca has given a lively picture of Roman dissipation, in the article of late hours:—“It is

an alarming symptom of national decline, when luxury has so far overcome nature, as to sacrifice health to fashion.”
Seneca Epist. 122. Ed. Paris, 1607.

P. 68. “*A dinner party.*” In his *Symposium*, Plutarch has a dialogue concerning those who invite great parties to dinner: the whole of it tends to show the folly of the custom; but one passage deserves particularly to be quoted.
Αριγων δε κοινωνιαν αναιρουσιν οι πολλους εις ταῦτο συμφορούντες, μαλλον δε ολιγους ποιουσιν αλληλοις συνειγαι.

P. 75. “*Hundreds of our fair countrywomen.*” Dr. Beddoes has borne testimony to the numbers who yearly die of consumption from the want of warm clothing: the poor are to be pitied for their wants, but the fools of fashion deserve to suffer for their vanity.—*Beddoes on Consumption, Article Dress, &c.* The newspapers afford almost daily proof of some unfortunate female who has lost her life by fire, from the lightness of her dress; the silks and satins of our grandmothers afforded a preservative against this destructive element.

P. 80. “*Savage ignorance.*”

“Ignorance is the curse of God;
 Knowledge, the wing wherewith we fly to heaven.”

Second Part of Henry VI.

P. 88. “*Tempting Providence.*” A curious remark to this effect is to be found in the 2d volume of Harris’s *Voyages*, chap. vii. “A servant of Sir Thomas Rowe’s went out one morning and got himself married, though he had three wives already. This may be called drawing bills upon Providence without a sufficient warrant for their payment.”

90. “*Pope and Dryden.*” I will not deny that there is much genius in Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Keats; but till they have learnt to polish and correct their first effu-

sions; I will not recommend them as models of taste to the rising generation, nor compare the conceited singularities of the two first to the vigorous simplicity of Pope and Dryden. Mr. Wordsworth is a poet only when he forgets his own system; for I cannot consent to call that poetry, which has nothing to distinguish it from prose but rhythm.

P.90. "*Cheap and simple pleasures.*" The great change in dress, which has also had a considerable effect in producing a change of manners, was first introduced by the unfortunate Marie Antoinette of France, who thoughtlessly descended from her elevated rank to gratify her passion for variety, and by thus contributing to bring the royal authority into contempt, prepared the way for that sweeping revolution, which hurried along in its rapid course the good and the bad of all old institutions together. Soulavie, in his interesting but tedious Memoirs of Louis XVI. relates that "she was accused of having caused a revolution of dress and fashion in France, to the advantage of the linen manufactories in the Low Countries, which her brother was interested to revive. It is true, that our silks were no longer in use after the queen had borrowed from her chambermaids the custom of dressing in white. Brussels grew rich, and Lyons lost three-fourths of her population and commerce." Diodorus Siculus relates that Menes, the first mortal monarch of Egypt, introduced a great degree of luxury, both in dress and diet; his successor, Trepactus, being reduced to great necessity in his war against Arabia, lived one whole day on the vilest food, and being no worse for it, he uttered a heavy imprecation against the man who first introduced luxury; and even inscribed it on a pillar in the temple of Jupiter at Thebes — lib. i. cap. 145. To a mind rightly constituted there is a real luxury in the sim-

plest gifts of nature, and a fine day is a sensual enjoyment.

P. 107. “*Father Couplet.*” The indefatigable zeal of this learned Jesuit induced him to go twice to China, the first time in 1659; he remained there till 1680; he published his book in 1687, and after that set out again, but died on the voyage.—*Vide Dict. Hist.*

P. 107. “*Supreme Being.*” The religion of the Chinese seems to have been less encumbered with superstition than that of any other nation: Confucius taught little more than pure Deism, and held an opinion of the soul somewhat like the interior doctrine of Foe, the founder of their faith. Vol. ii. p. 147.

P. 110. “*To hate them.*” The expression probably means no more than how to show his displeasure or resentment, and is not used in the sense in which it was by a modern sage of great celebrity. “Dear Bathurst,” said he, “was a man to my very heart’s content: he hated a fool, and he hated a rogue; and he hated a Whig: he was a very good hater.”—See *Thrale’s Anecdotes of Johnson*, p. 83.

P. 115. “*Do to others.*” It is a singular coincidence, that this sentiment, so much applauded in the morality of Jesus Christ, should be found in the writings of a heathen philosopher who lived 2000 years before him. Its merits as a moral precept have lately been disputed by an eminent philosopher. It is not, perhaps, philosophically accurate, but it is practically true; for let any man consult his own breast, and he will find that, if he applies it in every case where he feels himself disposed to commit injustice, he will be powerfully restrained:—it is derived from that principle of self, which is the first motive of all our actions.

P. 117. “*O wv.*” For further information on this sub-

ject I refer my reader to Mr. Bryant's learned Dissertation on Moses, p. 215. On this subject also the reader will do well to consult Warburton's Divine Legation, vol. iv. p. 110 —a book in which a splendid paradox is most ingeniously and learnedly supported. No conclusion can be more hasty and unfounded than that of the great polemic, p. 120, "that Moses's Egyptian learning was a proof of the divinity of his mission." It is a proof of his Egyptian origin, and nothing further; he only destroyed those customs which tended to keep alive the practice and remembrance of Egyptian idolatry. The liberal Christian will do well to read on this subject Dr. Middleton's excellent letter to Dr. Waterland.—*Vide Middleton's Works*, vol. ii. ed. 4to. The writings of this great divine gave a considerable blow to superstition and implicit belief. The genuine sense of Scripture never had a more able advocate, nor the church a more candid defender.

P. 117. "*The account.*" The existence of evil to a tremendous extent, no man is bold enough to deny: but how to account for it, or reconcile it to their religious opinions, has puzzled even those of the stoutest faith: the best method, however, to get rid of the difficulty, is to dismiss all such fruitless inquiries, and apply ourselves to the practical improvement of society.—*Vide Middleton's Works*, ed. 4to. vol. ii. p. 123.

P. 117. "*Murder.*" By the Jewish law, the crime of wilful murder was punished with death, *vide Ex. xxi. ver. 12*; and though Hume in his History seems to think otherwise, it was only in the case of a beast killing a man that the life of the beast might be commuted for money, *Ex. xxi. ver. 29, 30*. One law of Moses deserves our particular attention, viz. that if a man struck a slave, so that he lost an eye, a

limb, or even a tooth, the slave had an instant right to his liberty, *Ex. xxi.* ver. 26, 27. Murder in most barbarous nations was a crime to be obliterated by money; the regular price of different lives is settled by the Saxon laws. *Vide Wilkins.*

P. 117. “*The God.*” Plutarch has a treatise expressly intended to prove that Bacchus was the god worshipped by the Jews: but it is, in my opinion, *οὐδεν πρὸς Αἰονιστόν*, as the Greeks say, or nothing to the purpose.

P. 120. “*Ten Commandments.*” Bion the philosopher said, “That for God to punish the children for the sins of their fathers, was like giving a man a medicine for the diseases of his grandfather.” *Plut. de Sera Num. Vindic.* Moses says differently, *Deut. chap. xxiv. verse 11.* and *Ezek. xviii. ver. 20.*

P. 121. “*The system.*” The merits of Moses as a law-giver can only be estimated by comparing his system of laws with those of other nations, and considering him as a mere man, who like others pretended to have received his laws from heaven. Among these were Mnevis the Egyptian, who said he received his from Mercury; Lycurgus from Apollo; Minos from Jupiter; Zauthrastes from a good Genius; Zamolxis from Vesta; Moses from *Iæw*, or Jehovah; and Numa from Egeria. *Vide Diod. Sic. lib. i. cap. 94.* Many others in different nations have exercised the same pious fraud, which in the early ages of mankind was of considerable use. Josephus evidently considered Moses as a mere human lawgiver using the authority of God to give a sanction to his laws. *Vide Preface to his History.* Ed. Hudson. Oxon. sect. 4.

P. 121. “*Penal law.*” The laws of Alfred are founded on those of Moses. *Vide Wilkins, Leges Saxonicae.*

P. 125. "*Forming.*" The general aversion to reading the Bible, which now has hardly any exception but among old women, arises no doubt from the idea, that religion interferes with that generous indulgence of our appetites and passions which is almost inseparable from youth. The ridicule attached to the appearance of sanctity in young men has not been unobserved by the lively humour of Fielding; he makes Joseph Andrews tell Parson Adams, that he had employed all his leisure hours in reading good books; and among these he enumerates the Bible, *The Whole Duty of Man*, Thomas a' Kempis, and Baker's *Chronicle*—the latter a book full of lies and prodigies. The whole character of Joseph Andrews is a fine piece of ridicule on overstrained piety.

P. 125. "*The proverbs.*" The obscurity of proverbs is almost proverbial; for where much is to be said in few words, it is difficult to avoid ambiguity. The Greeks have many of these moral sentences, the earliest of which are collected by Theognis, and published under his name; and the writings of most of their poets are replete with these concise lessons of morality; but none more so than those of Euripides, Pindar, and Æschylus. Apostolius and Zenodotus, or Zenobius, have each published collections of moral aphorisms; but the most complete of all is that of Erasmus. In our own language we have three collections of proverbs, one in Camden's *Remains*, another by Ray, and one also by Grose.

P. 127. "*Tedious repetitions.*" The words wisdom, instruction, and knowledge, are repeated even to satiety; this proves that the whole is a compilation, and shows a want of judgement in the compiler. "Wisdom crieth aleud." *Vide cap. i. ver. 2, compared with cap. viii. ver. 1.*

and ix. 1. cap. ii. ver. 1. and iv. 21. and vii. 1. ii. 18. and vii. 27. Many of the obscurities attending these remants of ancient wisdom arise no doubt from a faulty translation; and it is much to be wished that a new one should be undertaken, which, avoiding the errors of the old one, may avoid also the conceits of modern language, that ill become so venerable a picce of antiquity. Few attempts of this kind on the Scriptures (as they are called by way of eminence) have hitherto succeeded, and yet much has been done by men of learning towards correcting the errors of the old translation, but they have wanted prudence to avoid the fopperies of a new one. A man of tolerable judgement, without any knowledge of the original language, might avail himself of the immense labours of modern translators, and, by preserving the old dress of the present standard version, might alter some words which either ill express the sense of the author, or have been totally mistaken by former translators. For a specimen of the faulty phraseology of modern versions, I will give a few passages from Hodgson's Translation of the Proverbs. "Scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge," cap. i. ver. 22, he renders, "Libertines take pleasure in vice." Why this alteration? for the old translation is sufficiently intelligible.— Cap. iii. ver. 30, "Strive not with a man without a cause," he has conceitedly rendered, "Contend not through litigiousness with any man." Ver. 34, "Surely he scorneth the scorners," he changes into "Surely deriders will he deride."

P. 127. "*That they.*" Though it can hardly be doubted that such a man as Solomon existed, yet many things that are related of him are so improbable and inconsistent, that they cannot be believed to the extent of the Bible account;

he was a king who most probably had some reputation for wisdom, and therefore the compiler of the Proverbs published them under his name; but they are altogether so irreconcileable with his character, and with every thing else we hear of him, that I have no doubt they were compiled in a much later age than that in which he was said to have lived. The whole account of his riches, his horses, his stables, his provisions, and his empire, has the air of a fable, and deserves to be treated as such: The number of his wives and concubines, the former of which amounted to seven hundred and the latter to three hundred, is also equally improbable, and incompatible with the excellent morality of the Proverbs. Let any man read impartially his history from *1 Kings*, cap. i. to xii. and *2 Chron.* cap. i. to cap. x., and then pronounce. The Book of Proverbs, however, has no need of Solomon's support; its own internal excellence is its best defence: and whoever wishes for wisdom at a cheap rate, gathered from the experience of others, let him read the Proverbs by day and by night, and commit them to his mind and memory.

P. 128. "*The Wisdom.*" There is a difference of style to be remarked between this book and the Proverbs, which arises from our having it only in a Greek translation, as it is related in the two prologues which are prefixed to it in our common Bible. It is hardly requisite to remark, that this book, not being written by an inspired person like Solomon, is not considered as of equal authority with the Proverbs by our church; it is not received into the canon of Scripture, and therefore is regarded, even by the faithful, as a mere human composition, though venerable for its good advice and antiquity. The learned have disputed much, and to little purpose, whether Jesus the son of Sirach was the com-

piler or the translator; it is, however, a matter of no great importance: others have disputed at what time the author lived; but this may be pretty nearly conjectured from Jesus's own account;—it could not have been written above a hundred years before him, and he lived in Egypt in the time of Ptolemy Euergetes, or the third Ptolemy. It is called Ecclesiasticus in Latin, to distinguish it from Ecclesiastes, or The Preacher. The latter Jesus, called the Christ, or the Anointed, appears to have been well acquainted with his name-sake, and his apostles not less so, which will appear from the following references:—Compare cap. i. with *James* i. 5; and ii. 15. with *John* xiv. 23; v. 11. with *James* i. 19; v. 13. with *Matt.* xii. 37; vi. 25. with *Matt.* xi. 29; vii. 3. with *Rom.* xii. 15; ix. 5. and 8. with *Matt.* v. 29; xxviii. 6. with *Matt.* vii. 17; xxviii. 2. with *Matt.* vi. 14; xxix. 11. with *Matt.* vi. 20; xli. 21. with *Matt.* v. 28.

P. 135. “*To relate.*” Vide Stanley’s History of Philosophy, Cudworth’s Intellectual System, and Enfield’s History of Philosophy.

P. 150. “*The lessons.*” I am not ignorant of the stories that have been told to the disadvantage of Socrates; but on deliberate examination they will be found to be only venial faults or idle calumnies. For a refutation of these calumnies, see Plato’s Symposium, towards the end. Mr. Cumberland in his Observer, vol. 3, has repeated most of them from that industrious gossip Athenæus. We should recollect that even Jesus Christ was called a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners. Aulus Gellius says that Socrates never was ill in his life; and that he never caught the plague, when so many thousands suffered by it at Athens.—*Vide A. Gellius, lib. ii. c. 1. Ed. Gronovii.*

P. 159. "*Is it.*" This somewhat resembles a sentiment of Dr. Johnson on the same subject—"Marriage," said he, "has many pains, and celibacy has no pleasures."

P. 162. "*Debauchery.*" We are told by Petronius Arbiter, that Socrates never saw the inside of a tavern, nor ever frequented public assemblies. The passage as it stands in Petronius, was restored by that most acute critic Janus Rutgersius. His *Variæ Lectiones* were first recommended to my notice by my worthy schoolmaster the late Rev. Hugh Moises, whose various learning and happy method of imparting it were only equalled by his polished address, disinterested benevolence, and genuine piety.

P. 165. "*The religion.*" No one who reads the Life and Writings of William Huntingdon, the coal-heaver and Methodist preacher, need wonder any longer at the success of Jesus Christ and his twelve apostles in an age of ignorance and credulity.

P. 168. "*Voltaire.*" These writers are merely Deists, and therefore believe almost as much as Christians. If I have gone further in the search after truth, it is because I could not satisfy myself on the principles of Deism; but I have derived little assistance from those who are called atheistical writers; I have only dipped into Dupuis, and found the greatest part of his book unintelligible, from my ignorance of astronomy. I have never even seen the *Système de la Nature*, which is the Bible of Atheists.

P. 170. "*The Essenes.*" For an account of this remarkable sect, see Prideaux's Connection.

P. 175. "*The refinements.*" A community of goods was strictly enjoined by Jesus to his followers, and practised by the early Christians. The only answer which he gave to those who asked what they must do to inherit eternal life,

was, “Sell what thou hast, and give it to the poor.”¹ *Matt.* xix. 23. *Mark* x. 21. Under such a system, the arts of civilized life must perish, and society be turned into a company of strolling beggars, who depend on the exertions of others for their support.

P. 175. “*To be repressed.*” See this doctrine admirably exemplified in Wilberforce’s View of Christianity, and Hannah More’s *Cœlebs*. This lady is a complete parson in petticoats.

P. 176. “*The morality.*” The Internal Evidence of Christianity by the late Soame Jenyns, whether written ironically, as a worthy friend of mine has suspected, or seriously, as is generally believed, is certainly not calculated to make Christianity appear in a very favourable light to rational believers; for he considers the virtues it inculcates to be not only new to the world, but much more exalted than any with which mankind were acquainted, and that it does away many which were before considered as such. “The doctrines of Christianity,” he says, “require the entire submission of the understanding before they can be received.”

Ibid. “*The fathers.*” See Barbeyrac de la Morale de Pères, 4to. 1728.

P. 180. “*Christianity.*” Rousseau, after rejecting the external evidences of Christianity, declares that “the majesty and simplicity of the Gospel speak to his heart.” *Vide Emile*, ed. Amst. vol. iii. p. 165. Mr. Godwin in the Memoirs of his wife, tells us, “that though bred in the principles of the Church of England, her religion was little allied to any forms, and was founded rather in taste than in the niceties of polemical discussion.” “The tenets of her system were the growth of her own moral taste, and

her religion therefore had always been a gratification rather than a terror to her." P. 33. ed. 1st. The amiable female philosopher Roland, in her *Reflections on Religious Morality*, confesses, that though she disregarded the external evidences of Christianity, she considered its morality as a matter of sentiment and feeling,—as the consolation of the wretched, the support of the unhappy, and the comfort of the unfortunate.—*Vide Œuvres de Roland*, vol. iii. The ceremonies of Popery and the beauties of Christianity have lately been decked out by Chateaubriand, in his *Génie du Christianisme*, in the most gaudy and pompous array, which, though it may suit the one, ill becomes the simplicity of the other. The doctrines of the church, according to his account, are not the subject of profane examination, though its ceremonies and morality are calculated in the highest degree to warm the imagination and interest the feelings; and he has accordingly dressed them in all the splendour which the French language can afford, but it is not the language of Fenelon or Bossuet.

P. 184. "*Sordid interest.*" This subject has lately been treated by Dr. Parr with all the gorgeous pomp of eloquence, with all the specious subtleties of argument, with all the solemn parade of metaphysical disquisition, with all the magisterial weight of authority, and with all the exuberant display of reading for which the Doctor is so eminently distinguished; but without that luminous simplicity of language, or arrangement of ideas, in which the Doctor is so eminently deficient. His meaning is lost in the multitude of his words; it is almost impossible for a plain man to make out what he means; and when with much time and study he has found out the Doctor's drift, he wonders how any man could take so much pains to perplex so plain a sub-

ject. The Doctor would certainly have gained a victory over Mr. Godwin, if Mr. Godwin had not first gained one over himself; for his candid confession that he had rather overstrained his system of philanthropy, to the exclusion of our private affections, ought to have disarmed the Doctor's wrath, and prevented the display of his hostile weapons; but the book was written, and it was too great a sacrifice to expect that it should not be published. As the matter now rests, there is very little difference between the divine and the philosopher on the subject of benevolence, except that the latter conceives it the duty of a man to do rather more for the public than his antagonist. Mr. Godwin has published a plain statement of his present opinions, and with the candour of a true philosopher has acknowledged his past faults, so that the Doctor and he ought to shake hands and be reconciled. Among the many errors which the former seems to me to have committed, that of confounding Hobbes, Mandeville, and Rochefoucault with Rousseau and Helvetius, is one of the greatest; that is to say, the system of gross selfishness, with pure self-love—systems which are as different from each other as the brightness of a limpid stream from the dullness of a stagnant pool. The three first writers view human nature continually on the darkest side, and abandon her with sullen misanthropy as incapable of being improved; the others lament her defects, but point out the means of amendment.

P. 186. “*The Economy.*” The reputation of Lord Chesterfield, to whom it was attributed, supported it for a while; but after it was known to be the production of Robert Dodsley the bookseller, it ceased to be read by the great, though its remembrance has not yet perished.

P. 192. “*A learned female.*” The morality of Epic-

tetus has gained the esteem of two celebrated ladies ; for among the letters of Lady Wortley Montague, lately published, are found some specimens of a translation of the Grecian moralist. Mrs. Carter's translation has been long known and admired. It was once proposed to me by the late excellent and invaluable Gilbert Wakefield, to contribute my mite to such a translation.

P. 196. "*Tract on education.*" I am not ignorant that Wyttenbach affirms this treatise to be Plutarch's : but to me it is with a book as with a picture ; if it is a good one, I never care whose it is.

P. 202. "*How.*" This treatise has been accurately and elegantly translated by my friend Thomas Northmore.

P. 226. "*Candid examiner.*" Vide Mudford's Essay on the Life and Writings of Johnson.

P. 231. "*Plato.*" I refer my readers to the Greek Anthology for an Epigram on the mean origin of man—*Vide Anthol. Ed. Poschii*, vol. i. p. 328, 330. In the second Epigram, Grotius, whose translations should rather be called elegant imitations, has added a line not found in the original, still more expressive of human insignificance :—

Hoc, hominum voce, vocatur homo.

"And this creature is called a man."

P. 236. "*The Stoics.*" Plutarch in a Treatise on the Inconsistencies of the Stoics, has sufficiently proved that these inconsistencies arose from their desire to accommodate themselves to the popular opinion concerning the Gods, and that in reality they believed only in one God, and that God the Universe ; sometimes they call it Jupiter, sometimes Fate, Destiny, Nature : *Eπαγκείη*, and *Ἄρχατος*, words which cannot possibly be translated.—*Vide Plutarchi Moralia, Ed. Wyttenbach. tom. v. part 1.*

The fragments of a treatise are also left, in which Plutarch tells us the opinions of the principal Grecian philosophers; they mostly agree in believing matter eternal and infinite.—*Tom. v. part 2. p. 746.*

P. 236. “*Unintelligible.*” The doctrines of Plato must ever be viewed with a degree of interest and curiosity, as containing the origin of the Christian theology; for there is no doubt that the Platonic philosophy was the parent stock of the Trinitarian belief, and may be pursued regularly from Plato himself through the school of Alexandria to the Gospel of St. John. Gibbon has furnished ample materials for the search; *vide Hist. vol. iii. ed. oct. p. 315;* and at the same place quoted St. Jerome, who says that Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, confessed he could not understand the *Timæus* of Plato.

P. 236. “*To this.*” The mischief which the Platonic school of philosophy at Alexandria did to genuine Christianity may be seen by Mosheim’s *Eccles. Hist.*, and Robinson’s *Eccles. Researches*, p. 51. To detail all the nonsense of Philo, Plotinus, and Proclus, would afford little entertainment to a rational mind; for their disquisitions exhibit only a miserable perversion of human intellect, and an instance of time most pitifully misspent. The gigantic labours of the great modern disciple of Platonism, are a striking proof of the strength and weakness of the human mind; but when connected with purity of life and amiable manners, the errors of intellect may be pardoned.—*Vide Edinburgh Review, No. 27. Ap. 1809.*

P. 237. “*Friendship.*” Idem velle atque idem nolle ea demum firma amicitia est.

P. 239. “*He who has.*” The translator of Diogenes Laertius has committed a curious blunder here, and entirely

spoilt the passage. The words in the original are ω φίλος οὐδεὶς φίλος, vide sect. 21; the sense of which I suppose to be, He who has many friends has none, taking ω for the dative case of the pronoun δ ; but the bungling translator has understood it to be an exclamation, and rendered it *o amici, amicus nemo*, which no man can translate. The acute Helvetius, who was certainly no Greek scholar, has adopted this error.—*Vide l'Esprit, disc. iii. cap. 14.*

P. 241. “*The chaos of Hesiod.*” The lines of Hesiod are:—

*Ητοι μὲν πρωτιστα χαος γενετ² αυταρ επειτα
Γαι ευρυστερος παντων εδος.*

P. 243. “*His school.*” By his will he left his house and gardens to his successors for ever, and a part of his fortune for their maintenance. The ruins of this house were in existence when Cicero was at Athens, two hundred years after Epicurus’s death; and the Council of Areopagus having granted the ground to one Memmius to build upon, the whole sect of Epicureans, considering it as a kind of profanation, entreated Cicero, through his friend Patro and others, to use his influence to prevent its taking place. His letter to Memmius on the occasion is in the Epist. ad Fam. xiii. 1.—*Vide Middleton’s Cicero, vol. ii. p. 173. and Gibbon, vol. vii. p. 147.*

P. 244. “*To consider death.*” Epicurus was not singular in his opinion of death; for Socrates, as quoted by Plutarch, and Plutarch himself, in his consolatory advice to Apollonius for the loss of his son, says thus: “A state of insensibility is a release from care and sorrow; for as there can be no good in such a state, so there can be no evil; and as good and evil can only belong to those who exist, so they can have nothing to do with those who are taken from a

state of existence. They who are dead, therefore, are placed in the same state in which they were before their birth.”—*Vide Plut. ed. Wyttensbach, oct. vol. i. p. 433.*

P. 255. “*The Stoics.*” The Stoics, who despised both pleasure and pain, and the Epicureans, who considered them as the summit of good or evil, were a kind of natural enemies to each other.

P. 255. “*His doctrines.*” Diogenes Laertius enumerates all the calumnies against him, among which one was, that he considered the pleasures of the senses as the greatest goods of life. Cicero has adopted this in his Tusculan Disputations, lib. 3, and Athenæus has repeated it three different times. Another calumny against him was, that he despised all learning whatever; whereas we find from Diogenes, cap. 121, that it was only the misapplication of learning which he despised. Quintilian has also adopted the mistake, *Inst. ii. c. 18*, and *xii. 1*. Plutarch has followed his example; and it is no wonder that Athenæus, who never stopped to examine what he related, should have repeated the lie. *Vide xii. p. 547.*

P. 256. “*The first.*” Plutarch has two treatises against the Epicurean philosophy, which it is evident he either did not understand, or wilfully chose to misrepresent. He argues as if Epicurus maintained doctrines which he never did maintain, but were the doctrines of his degenerate disciples.

P. 256. “*Defamers.*” Athenæus quotes several passages from these writers in which the philosophy of Epicurus is ridiculed, particularly one from Damascenus describing a cook who vaunted of his qualifications, and comes fresh from the school of Epicurus. Lucian wrote his account of Alexander the impostor expressly to expose a man

who had calumniated Epicurus. *Vide Lucian. Ed. Hemst.* vol. ii. p. 239, 253, 264.—For more complete information concerning Epicurus I refer my reader to that storehouse of Greek bibliography, the *Bibliotheca Græca* of Fabricius, edited by Harles, of which twelve volumes are now published.

P. 257. “*Expelled from Rome.*” Montagu’s Rise and Fall of ancient Republics. *Vide Nichols’s Anecdotes,* vol. iv. p. 635.

P. 258. “*Vulgar ribaldry.*” He expressly says in one place, that Epicurus placed all the happiness of life in the pleasures of the belly, *lib. xii. 546*; but here he misquoted Plutarch, who quoted it from Metrodorus. *Vide Cic. de Nat. lib. iv. 40.*

P. 258. “*The principles.*” The older school of Epicurus in France, met at the house of the celebrated Ninon de L’Enclos; the principal of them were the Countess de Suze, the Countess d’Olonne, and St. Evremont. The second school was more numerous, and the last more decent. *Vide Dictionnaire Historique.*

P. 259. “*Efficient.*” See the Notes of Meibomius, towards the latter end of the Life of Diogenes Laertius. The contrast between the candid remarks of Meibomius, and the coarse ill-nature of the two Casaubons, in their notes on this Life, is curious, and shows the difference between the liberality of true philosophy and the narrow prejudices of ecclesiastical bigotry. Cicero, in his first two books, *De Finibus*, has very fully discussed the merits of the Epicurean philosophy, and in the person of Torquatus has pronounced a most eloquent and perspicuous eulogium on the life and doctrines of his master. Cicero, in his answer to this speech, proceeds on a too limited interpretation of the word pleasure, which Torquatus meant to be understood

In the refined sense of mental gratification arising from the consciousness of acting right. In other parts of his writings, though professing to differ from him, he disdains to calumniate. Many ancient authors have incidentally spoken well of Epicurus. *Juv. Sat.* xiii. and xiv. 319. *Stat. in Tib. Man. Sylv.* i. 90. Horace was a disciple of Epicurus, and Virgil an admirer: vide *Donati Vita Virgilii cum Notis Heynii*, vol. i. Stanley, in his Lives of the Philosophers, and the writer of his Life, have both shown an evident partiality for the morality of Epicurus, which may be seen by those who refer to the parts of the book just mentioned.

P. 269. “*The New Academy.*” The doctrines and history of the different sects of philosophy in Greece may be found in various authors: Clemens Alexandrinus, in his *Stromata*, lib. 228 to 309, has the most ancient account. Stanley and Brucker are the best general modern historians of philosophy, though the former comprehends only the ancient; and Middleton in his Life of Cicero has given the descent of the Academy. Vol. 3. Enfield’s History of Philosophy, which is a judicious translation and abridgement of Brucker, may be also consulted: though such books cannot be read entirely, they are useful for reference, and they display a dismal waste of intellect on subjects of little utility.

P. 271. “*Deduces the right.*” Ergo unum debet esse omnibus propositum, ut eadem sit utilitas uniuscujusque et universorum, quam si ad se quisque rapiat, dissolvetur omnis humana consortio, lib. iii. 6. Quod si nihil est tam contra naturam quam turpitudo, nihilque tam secundum naturam quam utilitas, certe in eadem re utilitas et turpitudo non esse potest. Ed. 7.

P. 274. "*The proper study.*" Pope, who was a great borrower, has taken the very words of this sentiment from Charron :—

Le vrai étude de l'homme, c'est l'homme.

Charron de la Sagesse, Preface au Premier Livre.

P. 286. "*The moral.*" Dr. Paley was a man of great strength and clearness of intellect ; on most subjects he saw what was right, but he durst not always embrace it ; he generally tried to make a compromise between his reason and his interest ; he did not wish to be rich, but he was too indolent to run the risk of being poor.

P. 306. "*The Scripture.*" I have lately found that Casimir Litzinsky entertained the same opinion, for which he was executed at Grodno in 1689 as an Atheist.

P. 308. "*Man never satisfied.*" Vide *Heliodori Æthiopica*, Ed. Comm. p. 103.

P. 308. "*A modern.*" We are certain that infinite power cannot be employed without effect, nor infinite wisdom without design ; we may therefore rationally conclude, that this world could be designed for nothing more than a prison, in which we are to receive punishment for offences committed in a former, and to prepare ourselves for the enjoyment of happiness in a future existence.—*Jenyns's Disquisitions*, p. 30.

P. 310. "*The evidence.*" The resurrection of a dead body, after having lain two whole days in the grave, is a fact so contrary to the common sense of mankind as not to be capable of proof by any human testimony, and therefore, to acquire any degree of credit, should have been frequently repeated and generally attested : but it happens that in the New Testament the fact is not sufficiently attested, and the fact and the argument are at variance with each other ; for

they who believe St. Paul to have been an inspired apostle, must allow that his account of the resurrection is to be trusted; and yet in his famous xvth chapter of the 1st Corinthians, from verse 3d, the whole of his argument tends to prove that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;" which means, that we must put on a new body in order to be raised from the dead, for "that which is mortal cannot inherit immortality;" and yet, when Jesus means to prove to Thomas the certainty of his resurrection, he called to him to "thrust his hand into his right side," that he might be convinced he bore the same body which had been crucified.

P. 310. "*The analogy.*" Bishop Butler, in his celebrated *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed*—a book more remarkable for metaphysical refinement than sound reasoning—rests his whole argument upon the divine origin of the system of nature: and taking that for granted, he infers, that revelation coming from the same author, is liable to the same defects, and that they who believe the one must of consequence believe the other, because its defects are not greater; but this is taking two things for granted which ought to be proved independently of each other. His arguments for a future life are composed of equally gratuitous assumptions; his two first are utterly destitute of foundation. The first is, "That having already undergone many changes from our birth to maturity, we should naturally infer that we shall exist hereafter:" but he forgets that these changes are gradual and imperceptible, and that there is no gulf between them like that of death: he argues also from the changes of animals, viz. worms into butterflies, &c.; and, to be candid, is forced to allow them also a future state of existence. His second

reason is still more bold than the first; for he says, "That having the faculties and capacities of action before death, is a presumption that we shall possess them after." And again, "Knowing that all other animals are possessed of these powers *up* to the very period to which we have faculties capable of tracing them, is itself a probability of their retaining them *beyond* it, and this is confirmed by remarking the very great changes we have ourselves experienced." This may be orthodoxy, but it is not argument.

P. 312. "*Capable of proof.*" That the idea of a God is not innate, but the result of reasoning, is evident from this circumstance, that Sabeism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies, is the earliest religion. *Vide Plato Cratylus*, p. 258. Diodorus Siculus, *lib. iii. 8*, tells us that many of the Ethiopians believe not in any gods, and even curse the sun, running into the marshes at his rising. *Vide also Strabo p. 822. Ed. Amst.*

P. 312. "*The Scripture.*" Whoever will take the trouble to consult Plutarch's Treatise, ed. Wyttensbach, Tom. iv. p. 2, *Περὶ τῶν αρεσκοντῶν τοὺς φιλοσοφοὺς*, will see from whence men first derived their notions of the gods. It arose, he tells us, from contemplating the beauty and regularity of the heavenly bodies. - The sky they called the father, and the earth the mother of all things. Nature, it is evident from hence, was the first god, and the different operations of Nature being subdivided, formed many other gods. It is somewhat singular, and worthy of remark, that though omnipotence is the greatest attribute of God, yet there are many things which even God cannot do; he is bounded by Nature or Necessity; he cannot make the same thing to be, and not to be; he cannot make the past present; he cannot make snow black; fire cold; nor

crooked straight; in short, he cannot alter the order of Nature: he is, therefore, not omnipotent.

P. 312. "*Its own punishment.*" Vide Plutarch, *Περὶ τῶν υπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ*. Ed. Wyttenbach, Tom. iii. part 1. p. 244.

P. 313. "*A monkey.*" A wicked man is a much more mischievous animal than a monkey.

Simia quam turpis simillima bestia nobis.

Vide Ennii *Fragmenta*, p. 140. Ed. Hessel.

Plato says that the most sacred of all things is a good man, and a bad one the most profane. Vide *Dial. Minos*.

P. 313. "*Privileges.*" Pindar thus describes the frail and perishable nature of man:—

Ἐπαμεγοι, Τίδε τις; τιδ' ουτις;

Σκιας οναρ αὐθρωπος.

P. 316. "*To be inquisitive.*" We think we know a great deal about a future life, whereas we know nothing.

Vano error vi lusinga

Poco vedete, et parvi veder molto.

Petrarca *Canzone 16.*

P. 316. "*To be just.*" *Το δε ευ ζην, ἐστι κοινωνικως ζην,*
και φιλικως και σωφρονως και δικαιως.

Plut. *Πρὸς Κολωτην*, Tom. v. pars prima.

P. 318. "*Matter.*"

Αλλο δε' σοι ερεω: φυσις ουδεν αεστειν εκαστου,
Θυητων, ουδε τις ουλομενη θανατοιο γενεθλη,
Αλλα μονον μιξις τε διαλλαξις τε μιγεντων,
Εστι, φυσις δ' επι τοις ονομαζεται αυθρωποισι.

Empedocles in Plutarcho *adversus Colotem.*

P. 318. "*We are convinced.*" Vide Plato *De Legibus*, lib. iii. sub initio.

P. 321. "*The miseries.*" A Christian bishop of the fourth century, in a novel full of interest and entertainment,

tells us, that the Divinity never allows us to taste of pleasure without a proportionate mixture of pain and misfortune.—*Vide Heliodori Æthiopica, lib. 5.* Plato says,

Πολὺ γαρ εἰλιττὸν τὸ αγαθὸν τῶν πονημάτων ηὔπονον.

De Repub. lib. 2.

P. 321. “*Though many.*” The wars which have been excited on account of religion—a thing which, if it has any use, should be to promote peace—have, upon a moderate calculation, cost the world nine millions seven hundred and eighteen thousand eight hundred persons, shot, drowned, burnt, tortured, and hanged, for the love of God and the honour of his Son. The foreign and intestine wars which have at different times ravaged the world, cannot be computed to have cost a less number; so that, taking into consideration also the miseries which men cause to each other, short of death, it seems as if one half of the world was formed to torment the other.

The great object of nature, after bringing a man into the world, is how to get him out of it; and we shall find that in every man are implanted the seeds of destruction, which “grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength;” for all he eats, drinks, or does, only tends to that dissolution of the material frame, which to some men arrives sooner, and to others later; and so different are the effects of these different causes upon different bodies, that it seems as if there were some people whom nothing can kill, and others whom nothing can keep alive.

P. 325. “*Redundant population.*” The doctrine of population as the origin of evil, seems to have been obscurely seen by Chrysippus, one of the sect of Stoics; for in a treatise on the Gods, which Plutarch quotes, he says, “As cities abounding in population send out colonies or under-

take wars to relieve themselves, so God is the author of destruction for the same purpose." And again, "The Trojan war was caused by the gods as a drain for the excess of population." The whole chapter is well worth attention.—*Plutarch. Moral. Ed. Wyttensbach, Tom. v. p. 1. c. 32.*

P. 325. "*Man in.*" Mr. Hobbes has been much censured for affirming that a state of nature is a state of war. *Vide Leviathan, p. 85*: but the experience of all ages and nations bears testimony to the truth of his assertion. The laws of nature, such as equity, justice, mercy, &c. are so contrary to our natural passions, that is to say, the natural desire of every man to get all he can for himself, that without the terror of some power to enforce their observance, they are nothing; and even covenants without the sword are but words.

P. 328. "*To prolong.*"

*Ηδὺ τι θαρσαλεῖσις
Τον μακρον τενειν βίον
Ελπίσι, φαναις
Θυμον αλδαινουσαν εν ευφροσυναις.*

Æsch. Prom. 536.

P. 329. "*Period.*" The origin of most chronic disorders is the stomach; it is therefore not only the quality but the quantity of what we eat which ought to be attended to; for even in times of scarcity more people die from eating too much than too little: riches produce more diseases than poverty. Herodotus tells us, that the Egyptians believe all diseases to proceed from what we eat and drink. *Vide lib. ii. p. 139. Ed. Wesseling.*

P. 330. "*All this happens.*" The idea of an overruling Providence is not an idea which naturally strikes an igno-

rant and uninformed mind ; it is a deduction of reason and the fruit of long research, derived from unfounded premises.—Mr. Dutens in his uninteresting memoirs relates a fact which fully proves this position, and shows us the unanswerable arguments by which uncorrupted reason confounds the arguments of sophistry. *Vide vol. i. p. 132.* It is also remarkable that none of the nations of South America, who were discovered in a savage state, had any idolatrous worship, nor any ideas of a Divinity. *Vide Barrington's Miscellan., and Voyage de Felix d' Azara dans l' Amerique Meridionale.* See also *Description Physique et Historique des Caffres*, which fully proves that men are capable of discharging all the relative duties of society without any knowledge or worship of a God. The Caffres are an honest, just, and virtuous nation.

The natives of New South Wales have no ideas whatever of religion ; they worship neither the heavenly bodies nor the other objects of nature, nor any other thing that has existed, and yet they have notions of right and wrong, both as applied to sensible objects and also to human actions. *Vide Philips's Account of that Colony.* The mistake into which our divines have fallen, who assert "that no country has yet been discovered where there are not some traces of religious worship," arises from their confounding the first stages of civilization with that of complete barbarism ; and even in the former, examples are to be found of nations existing without any ideas of religion.

P. 330. "The idea." From the mode in which the Deity is represented in almost all religions, it is easy to perceive that fear and ignorance are the parents of devotion.

Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor.

Vide Burmanni Anthol. Lat. vol. i. p. 575.

P. 334. "*All are.*" Levat enim dolorem, communis quasi legis et humanæ conditionis recordatio. *Vide Cicero Ep. ad Fam. lib. vi. p. 6.*

P. 335. "*The consolations.*" Belief is the sum total of religion; even the Deist must believe much more than he can comprehend, and to be consistent he ought to believe in miracles; for that Being who first established the order of nature, can surely, whenever he sees fit, suspend that order, and interpose for a particular purpose. They who believe that any Being created matter out of nothing, believe in the greatest of all miracles, and to such a Being nothing can be impossible. We none of us know any thing beyond the material world in which we exist; to dive into the causes of things is too much for our limited intellects: therefore the safest thing is to believe nothing we cannot comprehend.

NOTES

To the Essay on Liberty and Necessity.

P. 337. “*Divines.*” To enumerate all the divines who have attempted to solve the difficulties of this subject, and to reconcile faith and reason, would be to transcribe volumes of divinity, a task for which I have no inclination. I have got to the bottom of all their mud and mire, and tread on firm ground; for I believe nothing that I cannot understand, how little soever that may be; and on these topics, if every man would ingenuously confess his ignorance, the sum of our knowledge would be found to lie in a small space. The number of moral philosophers who have attempted to solve the difficulties of Liberty and Necessity, is not much less than that of the divines who have tried to bring reason and theology together: the subject is no where discussed with greater force of argument, vivacity, and good temper, than in the correspondence between Voltaire and Frederic of Prussia; the monarch had the best side of the question, but neither was deficient in elegance and well-turned compliment; they disputed like philosophers and like gentlemen, not like angry pedants tenacious of their own opinions; and their dispute is a model of philosophic discussion and polite controversy.—*Vide Œuvres Posthumes de Frederic II. vol. vi. ed. Lond.*

Though much has been written on the doctrine of Necessity, and many forcible arguments have been adduced to prove its existence, it has not yet found many proselytes, and for this reason; it is inconsistent with the belief of one

of the principal doctrines of Christianity ; for no man who believes in the force of Necessity, can believe himself the subject of future reward or punishment. Lord Kaines has answered all the objections to this doctrine on the ground of immorality ; and his essay is one of the best which the subject can afford.—See also Jenyns's *Miscellanies*, and Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, p. 327. ed. 4to. Hume's *Essays*, vol. ii. Godwin on *Political Justice*. Belsham's *Moral Philosophy*. Hartley on *Man*, &c. &c.

The poets, even on so unpromising a subject, have attempted to submit the subtleties of argument to the trammels of verse ; and have reasoned on fate, free-will, and necessity.—Milton is a believer in free-will, and puts his opinions into the mouth of God Almighty.—*Vide Par. Lost*, book iii. l. 95 to 134. Dryden favours the contrary opinion, and thus argues in his Palamon and Arcite :—

The Power that ministers to God's decrees,
And executes on earth what God foresees,
Call'd Providence, or Chance, or fatal Sway,
Comes with resistless force, and finds or makes her way ;
Nor kings, nor nation, nor united power,
One moment can retard th' appointed hour.
And some one day, some wondrous chance appears,
Which happen'd not in centuries of years ;
For sure whate'er we mortals hate or love,
Or hope or fear, depends on powers above ;
They move our appetites to good or ill,
And by foresight necessitate our will.

The writings of the ancients abound with proofs of their belief in an over-ruling Necessity, which the Greeks called by various names, and the Latins *Necessitas* and *Fatum* ;

the force of destiny they believed to be superior to that of the gods, and the dæmon of Socrates means nothing else than the power of necessity.—*Vide Plutarch. Περὶ τοῦ Σωκρατοῦ Δαιμονίου*, p. 343. Ed. Wyttenbach. I had conceived it must mean this, long before I had read the passage to which I now refer my readers. Euripides has a strong passage to the same purpose.—*Vide Ion. l. 1393*; and another, *l. 1408*. Juvenal says also,

Fata regunt homines.

Sat. ix. ver. 32.

Though my memory does not immediately supply me with all the passages I have read on this topic, yet any man conversant with the classics will be at no loss to convince himself of what I affirm. I have selected a few which may serve to show the general tendency of heathen belief on this subject.

The treatise of Plutarch on Fate contains some very strong passages on the subject of necessity. “All things,” says he, “in heaven and in earth are constituted by an original necessity, and governed by the same, through all the revolutions of time and eternity.” He then endeavours to reconcile this notion of necessity with the idea of providence, free-will, and contingency; in which he is by no means successful, and argues like a man who does not understand his subject, and is restrained in his inquiry after truth by some latent prejudice. To this it may be answered, that the belief of the heathens is of no consequence to us who have the light of the gospel to guide us; but in my humble opinion, the belief of the wisest heathens is preferable to that of those who believe in revelation; for the one is the effect of unclouded reason, the other of blind superstition. The following passages are a few, among many,

to prove the existence of that necessity by which all the universe is linked together :—

Την πεποιημένην μοιρα, αδυνατον εστι αποφυγειν και θεω.

Herod. lib. 1.

Ουδεν ισχυροτερον, αναγκης και τυχης.

Diod. Sic. lib. xv. cap. 63.

Αναγκαιη μεγαλη θεος. Callim. Hymn. in Delum, l. 122.

Δεινη γαρ αναγκη πάντα κρατουει. Orphei Hymn. 3.

Manilius opens his fourth book with a long passage on the influence of Necessity, or what he calls the Fates. Ammianus Marcellinus ends his fourth book with a similar passage ; but he calls Fate, or Necessity, Adrastia : he has also a quotation from Menander as follows :—

Απαντι δαιμονιν ανδρει συμπαρισταται

Ευθυς γενομενω, μυσταγωγος του βιού.

which he says, *salva firmitate fatali*, attends on every man as the guide of his actions ; but this *dæmon* is no more than Necessity, that *Natalis Comes*, which accompanies every man through the world. Ammianus begins his sixteenth book, “ *Hæc, per orbem Romanum fatorum ordine contexto versante.* ”

Δεινον γαρ ουδεν των αναγκαιων βροτοις.

Ed. Wytt. Tom. i. p. 438. Plutarch. Param.

Ισχυροτατον αναγκη, κρατει γαρ παντων. Thales.

Αναγκη ουδε θεοι μαχονται. Pittacus.

Παντα αναγκη και αρμονια γενεσθαι. Philolaus.

Παντα γενεσθαι κατ' ειμαρμενην. Heraclitus.

Της δινης αιτιας ουτης, της γενεσεως παντων, ην αναγκην λεγει.

Democritus ap. Diog. Laert.

To της αναγκης εστι' αδηριτον σθενος. Æsch. Prom. 105.

Sæpiissime apud philosophos et tragicos veteres, hoc genus consolationis quod ex necessitate petitur, occurrit, in quo

videmus parum esse præsidii ad recreandum, tamen ad animalium *firmandum et roborandum* nullam ei vim inesse, non concedimus.—*Schutzii Notæ ad Aeschylum*, vol. i. p. 42.

*Οστις δ' αναγκη συνεχωρηκεν βροτων,
Αριστος ειναι σωφρονειν μου δοξει.* Euripides.

Nec rupit fati necessitatem humanis consiliis.

Liv. lib. i. c. 42. Ed. Oxon. 1814.

It is hardly possible to open any Greek or Roman writer without finding the power of Necessity acknowledged in almost every page as superior to all human power, and even to that of the gods; in short, as coeval with the existence of matter, and existing from eternity. Livy has these words: “ut pareatur Necessitati, quam ne Dii quidem superant.”* Lib. ix. c. 4. Hesiod acknowledges the gods to have been created, and to be the produce of Earth and Heaven; and the whole story of Prometheus is no more than an allegory to represent mankind struggling with the evils of Nature, and submitting at last to Necessity.

αλλ' υπ' αναγκης

Και πολυιδριν εοντα, μεγας κατα δεσμος ερυκει.

Hesiod. Theog. l. 615. Aesch. Prom. 436 to 470.

Τεχνη δ' αναγκης ασθενεστερα μακρω.

Aesch. Prom. 514.

Τοιτων αρ' ο Ζευς εοτιν ασθενεστερος,

Ουκ ουν αν εκρυγοι γε την πεπρωμενην.

Aesch. Prom. 517.

Εμπης ο τι μοιρα παθειν ουκ ες επαλυξαι

Οτι δε μοιρα παθειν ουτε δεδοκα παθειν. Theognis.

Ti γε μορσιμον παρ-

φυκτον. Pind. Pyth. 12. 52.

See also *Aulus Gellius*, lib. vi. c. 2.

The God of the Jews and the Christians is nothing more

than the all-powerful Necessity of the Heathens, clothed with human attributes ; and for my own part, I had rather submit to the latter than the former ; because in suffering misfortune by the will of Providence, I feel myself treated with unkindness and unjust partiality ; but in suffering under an inevitable necessity, I experience no more than the common lot of all human beings. *Vide Lucian's Ζευς Ελεγχομενος* (Jupiter confuted), in which he boldly asserts the power of Fate over gods and men. *Ed. Hemst. vol. ii. p. 626.*
Φερειν τε χρη τα τε δαιμονια αναγκαιως τα τε των πολεμιων ανδρειως. *Thucyd. lib. ii. c. 64.* — *Διος και Ζηνος ονοματι,*
τοτε μεν τον θεου, ποτε δε την τυχην, πολλακις δε την ειμαρμενην
προσαγορεουσιν. *Plut. de audiend. Poetis, Ed. Wytt. 87.*

Xω Ζευς αλλοκα μεν πελει αιθριος, αλλοκα δι νει.

Theocr. Idyll. iv. 43.

P. 340. “*Jupiter is the air.*”

Isthic is est Juppiter, quem dico, Græci vocant Aëra, qui-
que ventus est et nubes.

Ennii Fragm. Ed. Hessel. p. 180.

P. 341-42. “*A particular interposition of Providence.*” The opinion of Dr. Hawkesworth on this topic is said to have cost him his life ; for the clamour excited against him by priests and bigots on account of a passage in the preface to the first Voyages of Byron and Cook, in which he ventured to deny the doctrine of a particular Providence, had an effect upon his health and spirits which he could not surmount.

P. 344. “*The root of all morality.*” A modern philosopher, of no small authority, has shown very forcibly, that the efficacy of moral instruction, and consequently of morality, is by no means diminished by this doctrine ; for, says he, “ If the human mind were not ruled by motives, this

art could not possibly have any existence." *Vide Forsyth's Principles of Moral Science*; a book which contains many new and interesting views of man and society.

P. 345. "*The mechanism.*" According to the system of Necessity, vice is no more in our own power than virtue: we act in both cases under the impressions which certain objects make upon our senses, and these senses move our desires, desires operate on the will, and the will produces the action: the rectitude or depravity of any man's conduct, therefore, depends on the impressions which he receives in his youth; for these impressions, frequently repeated, become habits, and form the character of the man: hence will be seen the necessity of a virtuous education. Let no man be alarmed at the idea of his being a mere machine, for at any rate he is not of his own making, and therefore has no more right to claim a liberty of action, than the right of making himself; he can do nothing which is not intended by a superior power, and therefore he need not fear being impelled to vice by an irresistible propensity; for if such is the will of Providence, it is not in his power to resist, though he may suffer for his imprudence: I will not venture to maintain that whatever is, is right; but I will affirm that it cannot be otherwise than it is.

P. 350. "*To interpret.*" Among many instances that might be produced of oracles and men pretending to know the will of God, the two which are now cited are, the one the most serious, and the other the most ridiculous:—The Carians, when attacked by Harpagus, one of Cyrus's generals, and threatened with the loss of their liberty, determined to defend themselves by cutting a canal across an isthmus, and make their country an island; but finding some difficulty in it from the rocky nature of the ground,

they consulted the oracle of Apollo at Delphos, who returned them for answer, "That they must desist, for Jupiter would have made their peninsula an island, if he had chosen it." *Herod. lib. i. c. 174.*—In the reign of Charles II. of Spain, it was proposed by some Dutchmen to render the Tagus navigable from Lisbon to Madrid. On the proposal being laid before the council of Castile, they returned for answer, after much deliberation, "That if God had chosen it to be so, he would have made it so; and therefore they begged leave to reject the proposal."—*Rev. E. Clarke's Letters on the Spanish Nation, Letter 15.*

P. 351. "*Anima mundi.*" It is somewhat singular, that as the vital spirit of man has been personified under the name of the soul, so the vital principle of the universe has been personified under the name of God; and yet neither can be proved to have any separate existence distinct from matter.

P. 351. "*If by a God is meant.*" Virgil, who leaned considerably to the doctrines of Epicurus, has expressed this meaning fully in two lines:

Totamque infusa per artus.

Mens agitat molem, et magnò se corpore miscet.

Æn. vi. 727.

Vide also Georg. ii. ver. 327; with Heyne's Notes.

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